

Transnational Labour Migration: Experiences of Mid-to-Highly Skilled African Migrant

Workers in Doha, Qatar

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Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## **Abstract**

This study sought to augment the dearth of research on African labour migration to the GCC and Qatar. The study focuses on younger mid-to-highly skilled Africans (from Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zimbabwe) currently working in Qatar. Attention was given to how racialized positioning intersected with other variables such as nationality, gender and class to shape migrant worker experiences. The study also considered those who migrated to Qatar as organization-sponsored workers and those on so-called free visas. Based on data gathered from 12 Skype and WhatsApp interviews, findings revealed how the sponsorship system gives employers power over employees, often preventing workers from switching jobs—particularly in the case of organization-sponsored workers—and in the case of those on free visas, creating vulnerability to visa racketeering. The study identified further modalities of exploitation such as salary delay and job insecurity, that added to the challenges of remitting money to family members in countries of origin. A majority of participants expressed the desire to eventually leave Qatar and migrate once again to Western countries where they imagined there would be better opportunities for professional growth, children’s education and naturalization.

## **Acknowledgements**

I express my profound appreciation to God Almighty for the successful completion of my Master of Arts program. I would also like to thank the following individuals; whose academic and moral support is unquantifiable.

My sincere appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Tom O'Neill, for his support and guidance all through the thesis writing phase. Thank you for your prompt responses, commitment, constructive feedback, and time. I truly benefitted from your extensive research experience, and thoroughly enjoyed working under your tutelage.

I must also extend my sincere thanks to my committee members, Dr. Rebecca Raby and Dr. Jane Helleiner, for their valuable insights and guidance. Your time and constructive feedback has improved my research skills.

To my external examiner, Dr. Louise de la Gorgendiere, I appreciate the time you took to review my work and for offering theoretical and practical inputs.

I also express my heartfelt gratitude to the participants in this study for their willingness to engage in my research. Without them, this thesis would not have been accomplished.

I would also like to thank my friends, who supported and cheered me up during the stressful times.

Finally, to my parents, spouse, and family members who have been my pillar of support: Thank you for your sacrifices, love, prayers, and words of encouragement all through the writing process.

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## CHAPTER 1: MIGRATION: A TOPIC OF CONCERN

Migration is a global ethical issue, and the flow of human capital across frontiers is increasing in unprecedented ways (O'Neill, 2007). In terms of demographics, youth are the most mobile social group and they have a higher propensity than older citizens for migration (Global Migration Group, 2014). Over the last few decades, international migration has been a focus of discussion and increased concern among the academic community, policy makers, and society at large (Modarres, 2010) for two reasons. First, the world has become more globalized, and while some countries reap the rewards of globalization, others have yet to benefit from this trend. Such disparity in the positive benefits of globalization creates economic inequality among nations, and youth in poorer countries thus aspire to migrate to countries with more stable economies to improve their own well-being. In some cases, the motivations for migration also may involve escaping human rights abuses, trafficking, and exploitation.

The second reason for the recent attention given to migration is the unending wars and natural disasters that continue to displace youth and compel state governments to review their immigration policies to either accommodate or refrain from accepting immigrants. Migration is not merely a demographic outcome of people moving from one country to another; rather, it is an ongoing process which entails a web of decision-making between migrants and their families across different spaces and time—pre-migration, migration, and post-migration (Jamie & Tsega, 2016; Kofman, 2004). There are several categories of migrants, including *refugees*, *academic migrants*, and *economic migrants*, and the migration process affects each category differently depending upon their motivation for migrating. For example, economic migrants have a distinct experience that is largely dependent on their social and economic disposition and the information available to them about their destination country.

One question considered by potential migrant workers is whether there are networks of individuals—for instance, family, friends, and agents—who can benefit the workers before and after migration in the destination country. Migration provides socio-economic benefits, including: an increase in standards of living, access to quality education, the potential for acquiring well-paying jobs, and expanded social networks. However, migration still comes with certain challenges pertaining to legal, social, and undocumented status considerations (Nwalutu, 2014). In part, such challenges can result from neoliberal global capitalism, which creates a particular demand for flexible, cheap, and extremely exploitable labour that is often carried out by illegal or unapproved migrants in the wealthiest regions of the world (Helleiner, 2013). The demand for international labour emanates from an uneven population distribution among economically stable countries and less developed countries; the former includes Qatar—a sparsely populated, oil-rich country—and countries with overall poverty such as the Philippines, Nepal, and other remittance-dependent<sup>1</sup> countries in Africa that export labour (Modarres, 2010). Also, international remittances contribute to the socio-economic development of a household, and it is thus a driving force motivating citizens (especially the youth) of less developed countries to seek foreign opportunities. More specifically, African youth are active participants in transnational labour migration, and thus they are the focus of this paper.

### **Purpose of the Study**

There is an extensive literature on the migration of African youths to Western Europe and North America, and an emerging body of research on the experiences of young Africans in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates). While some studies (e.g., Fernandez, 2010, 2011; International

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<sup>1</sup> I define *remittance-dependent countries* as countries whose economic stability heavily relies on funds sent by foreign workers to their home country.

Labour Office [ILO], 2013; Jamie & Tsega, 2016; Kifleyeuse, 2012; Pelican, 2014) explore the experiences of Ethiopian, Eritrean, Cameroonian, and Kenyan migrant workers in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, the well-being of African migrants in other GCC states (Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar), remains sparsely investigated and poorly understood. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the living and working conditions of mid-to-highly skilled African migrant workers in Doha, Qatar.

### **Why Qatar for a Case Study?**

There are several factors why Qatar is used as a case study. Primarily, since Qatar won the bid in 2010 to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, there has been a significant global influx of migrant workers to the region (Lahiff, 2016), the majority of which originates from South Asia (Naufal, 2011). There is extensive literature on the experiences of South Asians in Qatar, and these reports have drawn the attention of international human rights organizations. Of the wide-ranging research on South Asian migrant workers in Qatar, there are no identifiable studies looking into the experiences of migrants from African communities' other than a single study examining experiences of Ethiopian migrant workers (Pessoa, Harkness, & Gardner, 2014). My research is the first study that examines migration experiences and working conditions of mid-to-highly skilled African migrant youth workers in Qatar, which is timely given that Qatar is the first Arab country to host the World Cup. Migration to Qatar is an emerging route for African migrants, and this study fills a knowledge gap mainly because such migrants' experiences are missing in the overall report on migrant workers in Qatar.



### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this research are fourfold. First, the study explores factors motivating African migrant youth to work in Qatar. Second, the study seeks to understand the migration patterns of mid-to-highly skilled African migrant youth in Doha in relation to the *kafala* sponsorship system used to regulate the recruitment of migrant workers. Third, it examines migrant workers' working conditions and lived experiences in an attempt to identify any forms of exploitation. Lastly, the research seeks to identify whether African migrant workers keep in touch with their relatives in their homeland and/or engage in remittances, as well as their hopes of returning to their home country.

### **Research Questions**

Given the aforementioned objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors motivate African youth to work in Qatar?
2. How does Qatar's *kafala* sponsorship system influence the migration pattern of African migrant workers?
3. Are African migrant workers exploited, and if so, what are the different modalities of exploitation?
4. How do African migrant workers keep in touch with their relatives in their homeland?

And do these migrants envision themselves returning to their home country at the end of their respective contracts?

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will be relevant to the field of migration research in multiple ways. First, the study will shed some light on the migration experiences and the working and

living conditions of African migrant youth workers in Qatar. Second, the findings will help policy makers understand current challenges of global migration, and develop mechanisms and interventions aimed at protecting migrant workers. Third, the study will identify best work practices and structures in Qatar that may serve as an example to other countries experiencing an inflow of migrant workers. Lastly, the findings revealed that African migrant workers in Doha not only are labourers but often also highly skilled workers occupying managerial and mid-level positions whose experiences are not entirely aligned with those disclosed in reports on the harsh and exploitative conditions of migrant workers in Qatar. As such, this study will identify comparative differences in the experiences of Africans to the existing research on the experiences of South Asians.

### **Outline of the Remainder of the Document**

To provide a contextual background for this study, the next section of this introductory chapter highlights the trend of migration to GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and how Qatar evolved into a country that receives migrant workers. Then, chapter 2 provides a literature review of the experiences of African migrants in Qatar and of highly skilled African migrants on a global scale. The chapter also provides a brief review of the terms *migrant elite* and *highly skilled migrant worker* to show such labels' fluidity, and why this study chose the latter label to identify the research participants who are highly skilled. I then discuss the push factors compelling African youths to seek greener pastures abroad, and explain how the definition of youth in Africa differs from that which is widely accepted in the Western world.

In chapter 3, I discuss the study's analytical tool that draws upon critical race theory (CRT), which in turn posits that society is racially stratified and that "race" intersects with other forms of oppression—such as class—that is less salient than race for the purpose of this

research. The discussion also draws upon the concepts of White supremacy and White privilege to explain the existence of racial hierarchies, as well as concepts pertaining to colonialism and nation corresponding to the discrimination experienced by the study's participants, and how such discrimination correlates to an unequal distribution of power and resources.

Chapter 4 focuses on the research methodology, including the use of Skype as a method of data collection. In addition, the chapter discloses how the study was conducted, some background information on the study participants, and my rationale for including participants from across Africa.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 present the research findings, including factors that motivate African youths to migrate to Qatar and their patterns of migration. Such findings include the five modalities of exploitation identified in the study, namely: difficulties of switching employers and changing sponsors, disparity in remuneration between different nationalities and working conditions, exploitation of low and middle-skilled workers, salary delay, and job insecurity. Other findings discussed in these chapters include participants' pattern of remittance and their future ambitions. The chapters also concurrently discuss implications of the findings with specific reference to the research questions.

Finally, chapter 9 concludes the study with a discussion of the contributions of this research to the field of migration studies and offers directions for future studies, including recommendations to improve the well-being of migrant workers in Qatar.

### **Overview of Migration to the GCC Countries**

The GCC encompasses six countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—that share similar social, economic, and cultural systems (Al-Waqfi & Al-Faki, 2015), including abundant oil reserves and a large community of expatriates

(Zahlan, 2016). Despite (or perhaps because of) the GCC countries' rapid economic development—most notably that of Qatar and the UAE since gaining independence from Britain in 1971 (Zahlan, 2016)—they face a shortage in the national workforce, resulting in a proportionately large number of non-national residents and workers in relation to the countries' relatively small domestic population. Such shortages in the domestic workforce has compelled GCC countries to bring in migrant workers since the inception of the intergovernmental union of Arab states in the 1970s (Joshi, Simkhada, & Prescott, 2011).

The recruitment of migrant workers into GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) heightened in 1973 as a result of the oil boom in the region (Rahman, 2015). Progressively, the number of migrant workers in the GCC increased and migrants eventually outnumbered the native population; for example, foreign nationals in GCC countries represent 52% of the population in Bahrain, 69.4% in Kuwait, 45.4% in Oman, 89.9% in Qatar, 32.7% in Saudi Arabia, and 88.5% in the UAE (Gulf Labour Markets and Migration [GLMM], 2016). Overall, migrant workers on average make up 70% of GCC countries' population and approximately 90% of the labour force in a few of the states (Roper & Barria, 2014). The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA, 2007) estimated only 13 million nationals among the 35 million people living in GCC countries, while Kamrava and Zahra (2012) determined that the majority of the remaining 22 million migrants are categorized as low-skilled workers. Most of the GCC countries' (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), national residents prefer to work in the public rather than the private sector due to employment incentives such as attractive incomes and retirement plans (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2012).

GCC countries have been the destination of several migrant nationalities over the past decades, and have shown a strong preference for employing male rather than female foreign male workers. For instance, approximately 80,000 Bangladeshis migrated to GCC countries between 1970 and 1980; by 2010, approximately 2.4 million Bangladeshi migrant workers (most of whom are males) resided in GCC countries (Rahman, 2015). Similarly, the migration of male Jordanian nurses to the GCC countries, which began more than 30 years ago, has seen a steady increase since 1990 (Al-Nawafleh, 2015). While GCC countries had the lowest percentage of female expatriates globally in 2008 (14.4%), the percentage of female expatriates in the GCC nonetheless continues to increase (Fernandez, 2011). Kuwait leads other GCC countries with 46% of female expatriates, while Saudi Arabia has 16%; these numbers are expected to rise due to increasing social changes and the positive perception of education by national residents (Al-Waqfi & Al-faki, 2015).

### **Types of Migrant Workers**

There are two main types of migrant workers in the GCC: “low- to mid-skilled workers in construction and low-tech industries or services, and mid-to high-skilled workers in high value added services” (Roper & Barria, 2014, p. 33). Although Roper and Barria (2014) omitted domestic workers from the two main categories of the workforce in GCC countries, the studies cited below nevertheless show that migrant domestic workers have a notable presence in the GCC countries.

Domestic migrant workers have been greatly absorbed into the GCC countries. South Asian workers have a long history of working in the GCC. In the early 2000s, for example, there were 6 million migrant labourers in GCC countries, 20% of whom were domestic workers (Schubert, 1999). GCC countries have been a major point of destination for domestic workers

from South Asian countries, including the Philippines (Fernandez, 2011). The growing number of domestic workers is linked to the demand from high-and middle-income families in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, and it has been observed that African women are beginning to replace Asian domestic workers (Fernandez, 2010). Moreover, there is a growing number of low-skilled African domestic workers from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, and Egypt working in GCC countries (Jamie & Tsega, 2016).

According to Fernandez (2011), the Ethiopian migrant labour force has been feminized through an increase in female migration since Ethiopian domestic workers migrated first to Lebanon in 1999 and 2002 and then to GCC countries. Fernandez (2011) found that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait later became the top destination countries for Ethiopian migrants, accounting for 94% of Ethiopian female domestic workers abroad, and that an estimated 35,000 Ethiopians have migrated annually to these countries since 2008. More recently, the Saudi government took some measures against migrant workers who had not officially obtained residence permits; from November 2013 to April 2014, Saudi authorities deported more than 160,000 undocumented Ethiopian domestic workers, and this action affected the latter's economic, social, and psychological well-being (De Regt & Tafesse, 2016).

Eritrean and Ethiopian migrant workers have a different pattern of gendered migration to the GCC countries. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are the leading destinations for Ethiopian women, while Eritrean women migrate to a broader range of GCC countries (i.e. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as well as occasionally to Yemen and Lebanon. Eritrean men in contrast, are more concentrated in Saudi Arabia (Kifleyesus, 2012). Kifleyesus (2012) identified several factors motivating Eritreans to work in Arab countries, including geographical proximity, household income, political tension in Eritrea, and three

decades of war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Furthermore, Eritreans are the most preferred migrant workers in GCC countries because of their religious and cultural affinity, availability to work, reputed honesty, dedication, and hard work (Kifleyeuse, 2012).

Kenyan nationals also joined the growing number of domestic workers across GCC states; however, because of reported cases of abuse experienced by Kenyan migrant workers, the Kenyan government instituted an action plan in 2012 restricting Kenyans from working as domestic workers in the Middle East and began a bilateral dialogue with the top destination countries, Qatar and Saudi Arabia (ILO, 2013). Similarly, Ethiopian domestic workers in Kuwait complained of long working hours, non-payment of salaries, and poor or no translation of their work contract from the Arabic language to their language of comprehension (Jamie & Tsega, 2016). The human rights abuses experienced by Ethiopian domestic workers prompted the Ethiopian government to prohibit the labour migration of Ethiopians to the Middle East on October 19, 2013 (De Regt & Tafesse, 2016). For these reasons, the GCC countries are criticized for being sluggish in addressing employment irregularities in domestic work (Malit & Naufal, 2016).

### **Rights of Migrant Workers**

GCC countries' lapses in upholding migrant workers' rights may be attributed to the fact that the newly independent GCC countries are based upon fairly rigid, top-down government structures and have yet to develop legislative frameworks to ensure such rights are protected (Hamza, 2015). Some steps have been taken to address migrant workers' rights, such as in Kuwait where a minimum wage of 60 dinars (\$198 CAD) per month has been legislated for domestic workers (Whitaker, 2016), which represents a progressive regulatory framework that other Arab countries may choose to adopt. Still, the minimum wage stipulated by the Kuwaiti

government for domestic workers remains inadequate, and if further policies regulating migration and work are not implemented, the abuse of migrant workers is inevitable—especially in the GCC region where there is an overreliance on foreign workers to boost the economy due to the shortage of local workers in the service industry (Modarres, 2010).

In recent years, the GCC countries have embarked on highly ambitious infrastructural development projects in the education, health, and housing sectors (Shah, 2013; Storbeck, 2011), and hence attracting foreign workers with diversities of skills and expertise has become a top priority. GCC countries are a major destination for South Asian migrant workers due to proximity, among other pull factors. Indian expatriates, for example, have carved a niche for themselves in GCC countries and are among the largest expatriate community, numbering up to 5 million (Storbeck, 2011). Some Indian migrants bring with them expertise in IT and engineering, highly skilled professions that represent a value-added service to GCC countries. Both low- and high-skilled South Asians outnumber Arab migrant workers in GCC countries (Barria, 2008). Migrant workers have indeed contributed to GCC countries' infrastructural development, most notably in the UAE which has been transformed into a tourist destination that also attracts large numbers of African traders and labourers. Other research shows that Cameroonians with permanent resident status in Dubai function as business intermediaries in the importation and exportation of goods among African traders in Deira, Dubai's business district (Pelican, 2014).

Although GCC countries continue to develop, a social and institutional divide still exists between national residents and migrant workers (Hamza, 2015), which is most notable in the segregation of labourers who are prohibited from wealthier areas of GCC cities where Western and Arab migrant workers reside (Bristol-Rhys, 2012). Western migrants similarly have their



own challenges living in GCC states, though they seem to have some privileges based on their delegated places of residence. Research conducted on British expats in GCC countries found that British nationals have no sense of belonging and keep themselves “in check” due to the cultural practice of locals wanting to be in control in the workplace, such as in Oman where employers (the locals) can terminate British nationals’ contracts and ask them to leave the country (Walsh, 2014). Nonetheless, despite GCC countries’ shortcomings in protecting migrant workers’ rights, they remain a popular destination for many international migrants (Joshi et al., 2011), and the third largest transnational migration destination in the world (ESCWA 2007; Kamrava & Zahra, 2012). Overall, GCC countries are a significant region for labour mobility, and a major source of remittances (Naufal, 2011).

Based on cultural practices that predate the GCC, a *kafala* system of sponsorship was instituted to regulate the recruitment of migrant labourers—a widely practised system that governs and regulates policy in GCC, except for Bahrain (Malit & Naufal, 2016). The system permits only GCC nationals or institutions to sponsor migrant workers to live and work in Qatar (Erfani, 2015; Gardner, 2012), and all migrant workers in GCC states must have a sponsor responsible for managing all residency and work-related permits. When a migrant worker eventually secures residency in Qatar, a mandatory medical test is required prior to migrants’ resumption of work, and sponsors (known as Kafeel) are obliged to provide food, housing, transportation, and healthcare for workers (Storbeck, 2011). The system has been widely criticized for exploiting migrant workers because it prevents them from accepting other offers of employment without sponsors’ certified permission to do so, which the majority of employers refuse to grant (Gardner, Pessoa, & Harkness, 2014).

Studies have identified migrants' other life challenges in GCC countries. Low-skilled male migrant workers are not able to sponsor their families' migration nor are female migrants entitled to citizenship unless marrying a male national, or if the President (i.e. the Emir) grants court-ordered permission (Naufal, 2011). An exception to this is in Bahrain, where long-term migrant workers doing business may occasionally be conferred Bahraini citizenship (Walsh, 2014). GCC countries only function as a "permanent guest worker societies" in comparison to other Western nations that may confer citizenship to migrant workers (De Regt & Tafesse, 2016; Fernandez, 2011; Naufal, 2011). Overall, migrant workers in GCC countries are there on a temporary basis for work purposes, and the GCC countries make use of migrant workers' skills to address labour shortages. It thus is important to investigate how migrant workers might also benefit from their work, and the findings of this research will advance our knowledge in this regard. The next section will provide a review of how Qatar most recently became a destination for migrant workers, the factors that facilitate migration to the oil-rich country, and the working experiences of migrant workers.

### **Work Visas and the Welfare of Migrant Workers in Qatar**

Qatar has an estimated population of 2.4 million people, 89.9% of whom are foreigners (GLMM, 2016). Qatar has oil and gas reserves, and the revenue derived from these natural resources is reflected in Qataris' average annual income, which is estimated to be \$100,000 (Walt, 2013). Qatar's per capita GDP was over \$80,000 in 2008, placing Qatar among the wealthiest developed countries (Berrebi, Martorell, & Tanner, 2009). In part, Qatar's natural resources can account for its wealth, but the strong presence of migrant workers has also contributed to its robust economy. The shortage of a domestic workforce in Qatar necessitated

the importation of foreign labourers to meet this demand in the job market, especially in the private sector.

Private industry in Qatar is advancing rapidly, but there is a shortage of skilled Qataris to fill vacancies due to two main reasons: first, Qataris prefer to work in the public sector as civil servants, and second, most Qataris have educational degrees in the humanities or religious studies, with fewer having a technical or science background (Berrebi et al., 2009). The demand for low- and high-skilled migrant workers heightened when Qatar was assigned the responsibility to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Dun, 2014). Qatar, being the first Islamic nation to host the event, is trying to live up to expectations and as a result there has been a massive development of infrastructure and a great inflow of migrant workers across construction sectors (Rajouria, 2015). For example, an estimated 1 million migrant workers are needed to build 12 air-conditioned stadiums, rail and subway stations, restaurants, and hotels, and US\$20 billion has been allocated for the renovation of roads and highways (Lahiff, 2016).

The majority of migrant workers in Qatar are low-paid workers from South Asia (India, Nepal, and Bangladesh) who assist in the overall infrastructural development estimated to cost more than US\$220 billion (Amnesty International, 2013; Hamza, 2015). The recruitment of low-paid workers is essential to the growth of Qatar, especially when considering the country's small native population (Troop, 2015). Research conducted on low-income migrant workers in Qatar with an income of less than QAR2,000 (US\$549) per month revealed that low-income migrant workers in Qatar are young (average age of 32 to 35 years), the majority of whom are migrants from Nepal (Alshawi & Gardner, 2013). Similar data are found in other studies that list Nepal as one of the leading providers of low-skilled workers for cheap labour (Joshi et al., 2011), with some estimated 400,000 Nepalese migrant workers involved with preparations for the 2022

World Cup (Rajouria, 2015). Since construction work for the World Cup event began in 2010, hundreds of migrant workers have been documented to have poor access to basic needs (including food, water, and health services), while still others were reported to have been fatally injured on World Cup-related construction sites (World Medical Association [WMA], 2014).

Qatar has been considered a “21<sup>st</sup> century slave state” (Kaifi, 2015, p. 177) based on the reported experiences of Nepalese migrant workers in Qatar, which entail stories of exploitation, poor working conditions, and death (Rajouria, 2015; Tristan, 2010). The poor working conditions of South Asian workers and the alarming reports of work-related deaths have drawn worldwide attention on the suitability of Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup (Armour, 2015). Conditions worsen for migrant construction workers during the summer months, when temperatures in GCC countries reach 50° Celsius, exposing workers to heat-related illnesses (Hamza, 2015; “U.N. Sees Progress,” 2016). The two largest World Cup sponsors—Coca-Cola and Visa—thus intervened on the maltreatment of migrant workers with the hope that such corporate involvement might prompt FIFA and the Qatari government to protect workers’ rights (Troop, 2015).

Other studies list additional factors that contribute to migrant workers’ exploitation, such as the confiscation of travel documents by employers, non-payment of salary, or “job-switching” whereby migrant workers are assigned to altogether different types of job upon arrival than those previously agreed upon (Alshawi & Gardner, 2013; Amnesty International, 2013). One would expect that labour unions in Qatar would address such irregularities since their mandates usually encompass equitable employment relations. Although there is a ban on labour unions and strike actions in GCC countries (Hamza, 2015), Qatar amended its labour laws in 2004 to allow some workers to organize; however, such amendments are limited to workers in key sectors such as oil

and gas, hospitals, communications, power, and transport, and there are few strike actions in the region (Yalcin, 2015). The low occurrence of demonstrations in Qatar may result from an incident in 2010 when estimated 90 Nepalese construction workers who attempted a strike action were arrested and deported by Qatari authorities (“Nepali Workers Deported,” 2010). Such actions may have instilled fear in migrant workers and prevented them from organizing any demonstrations to advocate for their rights.

The exploitation of migrant workers is related to Qatar’s immigration and employment policies, which adopt the same sponsorship system as all other GCC countries (with the exception of Bahrain). The system permits a local Qatari citizen or organization to sponsor a migrant worker by assuming the legal responsibility for the migration process (Rajouria, 2015; Roper & Barria, 2014). The migrant worker is thus confined by law to work for the sponsor (i.e., the *Kafeel*) for a specific contractual period, during which time the sponsor may in some cases withhold travel documents (Pessoa et al., 2014; WMA, 2014). The sponsorship system thus hinders workers’ rights and well-being by restricting their ability to seek better employment opportunities or to return to their home countries.

The slavery-like working conditions of migrant workers have prompted international human rights organizations and FIFA administrators to investigate a series of allegations levied against the Qatari government and construction companies; however, the efforts of intervening organizations such as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Amnesty International have done little to alleviate migrant workers’ plight (Erfani, 2015; WMA, 2014). The Qatari government in turn argues that the *kafala* system is a necessary means to monitor the inflow of migrant workers (Roper & Barria, 2014).

Recently, a series of Qatari labour migration reforms have been implemented in response to the pressure from the international community regarding migrant workers' well-being. The new entry–exit law (No. 21 of 2015) effected in December 2015 states that migrants' workers on fixed-term contracts can switch jobs without the approval of their employers when their employment contract is completed. Other amendments in the new law indicate that migrant workers with open-ended contracts can seek work with other employers after 5 years, though they still require permission to do so from the original employers. If an employer's refusal to grant such permission leads to the cancellation of the migrant worker's residence permit, the worker can return to Qatar immediately with a new job offer and a new visa. The quick re-migration is made possible because the new law lifts the 2-year ban on workers who would like to re-migrate to Qatar under a new visa (Usman, 2017).

Furthermore, Article 26 of the new entry–exit law also states that employees who are terminated as a punitive measure cannot reenter Qatar for 4 years, though employees who are wrongfully terminated can appeal the court's decision. The new entry–exit law still upholds the old law but in a reversed approach. The new law claims to abolish the requirement of a no-objection certificate—a document issued by an employer to an employee indicating that the latter holds no obligation to the former. Although the new law states that employees do not need employers' approval before starting a new job, there are some conditions attached to a worker's ability to switch jobs, such as completing their original contract. While it is impressive that the Qatari government has implemented legal measures for unjustly terminated workers to seek redress, the extent to which court-appointed referees will exhibit fairness during such legal proceedings remains unclear.

Other amendments to the new law pertain to exit permits. The new law claims that migrant workers do not require permission from an employer to exit the country as long as they give 3 days' notice ("Changes Agreed," 2015); however, migrant workers require an exit permit from the Ministry of Interior. While the new law gives the impression that employers can no longer prevent workers from leaving Qatar by refusing to issue an exit permit, the reality is that migrant workers still need permission from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and employers to exit Qatar. In the old law, the employer applies for an exit permit from the Ministry of Interior but in the new law, employees apply for an exit permit through the MoI website, and the MoI forwards the exit document to employers for approval. Employers have the right to either approve the exit permit or disapprove of it. Employers communicate their decisions to the MoI and the latter also communicates the decisions to the applicants of the exit permit (employees). The only difference between the old and new law regarding exit permit is that the Qatari government made changes to who should apply for the exit permit. Whenever, a migrant worker exits or comes into Qatar, employers (who most times is the sponsor) receive a text message from the MoI. At all times, employers are notified when an employee comes into or exit Qatar. As such, the new law is not a true amendment or improvement of the old law addressing migrant workers' exit from Qatar, but rather indirectly upholds the old law.

Additionally, the new law is under scrutiny for its inclusion of "recruiters" instead of "sponsors" in its amendment pertaining to sponsorship, and the alleged reform still upholds the exploitative *kafala* system of sponsorship ("Changes Agreed," 2015). The distinction between sponsors and recruiters is important: sponsors are Qatari citizens or organizations that issue work permits, while recruiters are the human resources experts and personnel who search for the talent needed to execute the job. Diplomatically, the Qatari government retained the old policy by

replacing the sponsors with recruiters in the new law, thereby enabling the sponsors to maintain the *kafala* system.

The Qatari government also made other amendments in regard to the welfare of migrant workers, particularly the payment of salaries. The number of reported complaints on non-payment of salary necessitated the amendment of Article 66 of the Labour Law 1 of 2015, which requires employers to pay workers' salaries through direct bank transfers; any employer who violates the law will be imprisoned for 1 month and will pay a fine of QAR2,000 (\$542 USD) (Jaafir & Lucente, 2015). In addition, the Qatari government instituted a Wage Protection System mandating banks to process salaries and to monitor companies that are not complying ("U.N. Sees Progress," 2015). Other reports indicate that any employer who refuses to pay workers' salary 7 days beyond the due date will be blacklisted, and their employees then are free to switch jobs before the termination of their contracts (Pathak, 2017). It is obvious then that the Qatari government has taken steps in the amendment law to ensure workers' wages are not delayed.

Other unpleasant accounts of the working and living conditions of migrant workers seem to have received appropriate attention from the Qatari government. In addition to the aforementioned steps taken to ensure workers receive their wages in a timely and efficient manner, the Qatari government has notably improved workers' housing accommodations. For example, the government has recently built accommodations on the outskirts of Doha that house more than 100,000 migrant labourers ("U.N. Sees Progress," 2015), while another newly constructed "labour city" is expected to house another 70,000 migrant workers, at a cost of US\$825 million (Murungi, 2015). Although migrant workers still outnumber available accommodations, the Qatari government's efforts to provide suitable accommodation is a positive step towards protecting the migrant workers' well-being.



The literature on migrant workers in Qatar focuses primarily on South Asian migrants, while there is a dearth of research on African migrant workers, perhaps because the former has long been integrated in Qatar compared to the latter's more recent influx (Roper & Barria, 2014). In short, reports in the media and academic journals about the poor working conditions and living experiences of South Asian workers in Qatar limits our knowledge regarding other migrants' experiences. What is known about migrant workers in Qatar is one-sided, specifically from South Asian migrants' perspective, and how we talk about Qatar draws mainly from their narratives. In other words, the way the world speaks about Qatar is a product of the story that has dominated the media and academic literature.

Moreover, the way the world might talk about African migrant workers may stem from stereotypical views of Africans. The literature on the exploitation of South Asian migrants has been re-told many times, with the ultimate goal of creating awareness of the injustices experienced by these migrant workers. But such repetition potentially could hide or discount others' experiences, as the single story becomes the accepted truth. To date, reports on South Asian workers have claimed the status of truth about the migrant labour experience in Qatar, and it is privileged over other experiences. Therefore, the next chapter focuses on the experiences of African migrants in Qatar, as well as elsewhere in the world. I first will provide a brief discussion on the terms *highly skilled* and *migrant elite*, as they are mostly used to make reference to tertiary-educated migrant workers. I then will discuss how the term *global vagabond* is useful in illustrating the study participants' migration ambitions.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a literature review of the experiences of African migrants in Qatar and of highly skilled African migrants on a global scale. The chapter also provides a brief review of the terms *migrant elite* and *highly skilled migrant worker* to show such labels' fluidity, and why this study chose the latter label to identify the research participants who are highly skilled.

### Highly Skilled, Migrant Elite, or Global Vagabond?

The term *highly skilled* is defined differently across academic literatures. It is mostly used when referring to individuals with a university degree or extensive experience in a given field (Iredale, 2001). Other definitions argue that the term highly skilled tends to be “restricted to persons with tertiary-educated, typically adults who have completed a formal two-year college education or more” (Lowell, 2008, as cited in Jagganath, 2014, p. 216). Governments have mostly defined highly skilled through their education and occupation, which requires advanced training (Jagganath, 2014). There are three levels of education: “primary (low skilled: including lower-secondary, primary and no school), secondary (medium-skilled: high school leaving certificate or equivalent), and tertiary-educated (high-skilled: higher than high-school leaving certificate or equivalent)” (Capuano & Marfouk, 2013, p. 299) that distinguishes between the various categories of skills. The categorization of educational system stresses the idea that highly skilled individuals are those with tertiary education who could function in various capacities, such as “specialists, independent executives and senior managers, specialized technicians or tradespeople, executives and senior managers, investors, physicians, business people, ‘keyworkers’ and subcontract workers” (Arnold & Groutsis, 2012, p. 334). The varying definitions of the term highly skilled—and who qualifies to be called highly skilled—stimulate other critical reflection of what the term actually connotes.

Highly skilled individuals who migrate to work abroad are also labelled differently across academic literatures, including the terms *highly skilled migrant*, *migrant elite*, or *expatriate*, to mention but a few. Arnold and Groutsis (2012) distinguish between the terms highly skilled migrant and migrant elite. They argue that migrant elite is similar to highly skilled migrant, and it is dynamic and relevant compared to the static meaning of the latter. The authors defined migrant elite as: “individuals who gain access to the labour market in a position representative of their skills and qualifications and work within the elite profession in which they have been trained and/or have gained vocational experience” (Arnold & Groutsis, 2012, p. 334) such that they make informed choices based on objective and subjective factors.

Arnold and Groutsis (2012) coined the concept migrant elite following the findings of their study conducted on South African-trained male and female medical practitioners living and working in Australia. According to Arnold and Groutsis, the medical practitioners are ‘migrant elites’ as they are an embodiment of “highly skilled migrants with substantial investment on their human capital” (2012, p. 334). For instance, some of their participants had initially travelled to Australia on a visit visa to assess the professional opportunities available to them, the culture of the host country and their familial networks before taking a decision to migrate.

The term migrant elite represents someone with a high-class status who can afford the luxury of visiting potential immigration countries to physically assess available opportunities. I will argue that the differences between the terms migrant elite and highly skilled migrant are the pre-migration privileges available to these categories of migrants. A highly skilled migrant and a migrant elite both have a common feature: tertiary-education. However, some highly skilled migrants may not have the financial resources to embark on a visit to physically assess the potential immigration country prior to migrating. Economic status, the privilege of working in

one's area of study or interest and the ability to visit the potential immigration country prior to migrating are the three factors that distinguish between a migrant elite and a highly skilled worker. In some instances, highly skilled workers are underemployed and may not have the opportunity to work in their respective areas of study or professional interest, unlike the migrant elite who have weighed the professional options available in the host country, and would not hesitate to return to their home country to continue their profession. To this effect, this paper uses the term highly skilled to identify the participants in this study, because they all work in professions related to their skills (mid-to-highly skilled).

Bauman (1998) introduces the term *global vagabond* to explain the mobility of international workers:

They [migrant works] are on the move because they have been pushed from behind—having first been spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise, by a force of seduction or propulsion too powerful, and often too mysterious, to resist. (p. 98)

The participants in this study fit the description of global vagabonds, as they recounted how their working conditions (i.e. job precarity, delay in the payment of salaries, and disparity in remuneration between workers who hold 'strong' passports and workers with 'weak' passports) and the inability to become a naturalized citizen in Qatar propels the majority of the participants to plan on relocating to America or Canada. Bauman (1998) uses the terms *tourists* and *vagabonds* to explain the motivating factors propelling migrants to be on the move: "The tourists move because they find the world within their (global) reach irresistibly *attractive*—the vagabonds move because they do find the world within their (local) reach unbearably inhospitable" (p. 93).

One question that comes to mind is can a migrant elite be classified as a global vagabond? Yes, migrant elite just as highly skilled workers can be classified as global vagabond

because they both have the possibility of relocating from one country to another in search of better prospects. Prior to the migration of migrant elites, the elites could visit several countries prior to choosing a final desired destination. This act of moving in search of a better place of settlement could be categorized as global nomad. The participants in this study also fit the description of *global vagabond* based on their reported experiences in Qatar and their future migration ambitions.

The future migration ambitions of the participants also illustrate how the term *global nomads* is applicable as a conceptual analysis for this study. Bauman's (1998) theoretical point here states that

Wherever we happen to be at the moment, we cannot help knowing that we could be elsewhere, so there is less and less reason to stay anywhere in particular ... we indeed live in a strange circle whose center is everywhere, and circumference nowhere. (p. 77)

The above quote illustrates that human beings are prone to frequent mobility, moving from one location to another, and this movement is influenced by both objective and subjective factors. Hence, Bauman's (1998) point that the "center is everywhere" (p. 77) connotes that the world is a global place and anywhere can be a point of departure for would-be migrants.

### **African Migrant Workers in Qatar**

So far, only one study has been conducted on African migrant workers in Qatar. The researchers (Pessoa et al., 2014) admitted that they did not originally set out to conduct research on Ethiopian migrants in Doha, but their encounter with an Ethiopian driver piqued their curiosity. Their research with the Ethiopian community focused on the *free visa* and the sponsorship process in Qatar. Their study revealed that some Ethiopian workers in Qatar work under a supposedly free visa, a legal work permit authorized by the Qatari government to sponsors bringing foreign workers (Pessoa et al., 2014). The agents in Ethiopia, in collaboration with Qatari sponsors, sell the work permit for a fee (US\$1.725) which is higher than the cost of the regular work visa (US\$1.031). Unknown to migrants, the job offers tied to the permit are not real, and migrants are then to search for a job upon arrival.

The researchers further identified the dangers of holding a free visa. First, migrant workers who do not work under their sponsors risk repatriation if apprehended by the police. Second, some sponsors threaten to cancel an employee's work visa at any slight provocation, which is an abuse of power. Even though the free visa come without a real job offer, the sponsors of the free visa are still obligated under the *kafala* system to be responsible for the renewal of the work permit of their sponsees. Which means that the workers (sponsees) still have to maintain a cordial relationship with their sponsors so that their work permit can be renewed. When a migrant worker holding a free visa eventually finds a better job with another employer, such a migrant can request that the sponsor transfer his or her work permit to the current employer.

In general, migrant workers are treated unfairly at every stage of the migration process, beginning with the recruitment agencies at migrants' home countries, the GCC state governments, employers, and sponsors (Hamza, 2015). There are limited studies on African

migrant workers in Qatar to enrich this section; apparently, their experiences have been submerged amidst the stories of exploitation and human rights abuses experienced by South Asian workers. To fill this knowledge gap, I will provide a brief review of the experiences of highly skilled African migrant workers in other parts of the world.

### **Experiences of Highly Skilled African Migrant Workers Across Countries**

The movement of highly skilled professionals usually occurs from less-developed countries to economically stable countries. For example, the common destinations for highly skilled African migrants are: Canada, United States, Australia, Britain, and France (Beoku-Betts, 2008). Other leading destination countries are Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Italy, and Spain (Spadavecchia, 2013). Over time, skilled migrants from a specific African country have a trend of migration to selected Western countries. For example, the five major destination countries that host 90% of skilled South Africans abroad are the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and more recently, the UAE (Nyamvura, 2014). Similarly, the Nordic countries, including Finland, Denmark, and Norway became the desired destination for highly educated North African citizens, as these skilled workers aspired to fulfil their career aspirations and flee from the social, political, and psychological conditions in their home countries (Sabour & Habti, 2010). Particularly, research suggests that the numbers of female migrants are increasing. In 2000, for example, the total number of highly skilled migrant women worldwide was 49.3%, and 40.6% of these women were from Africa (Capuano & Marfouk, 2013). According to a joint report of International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada, the USA, the United Kingdom, Israel, Ireland, and New Zealand are the leading destinations for tertiary-educated migrant women from around the world (IOM & OECD Development Centre, 2014).

An example of outward migration of skilled professionals from across Africa is mostly evident in the healthcare sector. Healthcare professionals from other countries in Africa have progressively moved into the international health care sector. Research suggests that thousands of skilled healthcare professionals from sub-Saharan Africa migrate to developed countries annually (Jirovsky, Hoffmann, Maier, & Kutalek, 2015; Poppe, Wojczewski, Taylor, Kutalek, & Peersman, 2016), such that the World Health Organization (WHO) posits that there is a shortage of 4.3 million health workers globally, and a deficit of 1.8 million was recorded in Africa, thus leading to the deterioration of health care in the continent (WHO, 2016).

In terms of intra-regional migration within Africa, some African countries experience a deficit of teachers in the academic sector due to the rise of cross-border mobility within the African region. For example, the largest group of foreign trained migrant teachers in Swaziland is Zimbabwean migrant teachers (Tevera, 2014), and the outward migration of teachers may create a vacuum in the Zimbabwean educational sector. Even within the African region, skilled labour migration is engrossed with several challenges. A study conducted on Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa explains the bureaucratic, costly, and long procedure of accrediting foreign degrees and filing for a residence permit; this process often means that migrant teachers could not get permanent jobs, leaving them with no option other than to settle for less in their professional domain as non-citizens, as they could not confront exploitation due to a lack of job security (Sadhana, 2014). Likewise, migration outside of Africa may not provide better employment experiences for African international migrants. African migrant nurses in Australia experience contemporary forms of subtle everyday nurse-to-nurse racism, which includes racial discrimination from White nurses who constantly, but in a subtle way, question the competency, skills, and qualifications of Black nurses, and also subject them to constant



surveillance—leaving these African nurses with a feeling of non-acceptance (Mapedzahama, Rudge, West, & Perron, 2012). In addition, the findings of Mapedzahama, Rudge, West, & Perron (2012) point to how the 14 African nurses in their study encounter racial prejudice from patients who refuse to receive treatments from the Black nurses; when the incidences are reported to the nurse line managers, the managers put up a lackadaisical attitude and will not address the racist behaviors exhibited by their peers and the patients.

Other studies document the experiences of skilled African migrant workers across countries. For example, Agergaard and Ungruhe (2016) conducted a study on highly skilled West African sports labour migration to Northern Europe. Their study highlighted the experiences of African soccer players, the precarious processes of finding a sports league abroad, and the pressure to conform to the expectation of the coaches in relation to the racial stigmatization in sports, some of which include that African athletes are skillful and strong. These authors argue that African athletes are cautious of the fact that they are low-cost, transnational athletes who are sought after by football clubs, and these athletes use the racial stigmatization as a tool to negotiate for a better contract for themselves. Likewise, a study on four Sierra Leonean highly skilled scientists working abroad also shows how these women experienced discrimination based on their gender, “race,” and nationality, they still used the marketability of their life science skills to compete for professional jobs and obtain a permanent immigration status (Beoku-Betts, 2008).

Other studies highlight how the push factors propelling the migration of highly skilled Africans abroad could still prevent these migrants from living a settled life in the host country. Research shows how tertiary-educated South African migrants to New Zealand had easy access to employment in the early years of their immigration when compared to the Indians and

Chinese; yet, the easy access to employment enjoyed by South Africans did not exempt them from having poor mental conditions, which is related to the political instability and violence during the apartheid era in South-Africa (Pernice, Trlin, Henderson, North, & Skinner, 2009). Additional studies on highly skilled South Africans focused on their housing experiences alongside that of Indians and Chinese migrants in New Zealand. The findings of the study were more positive. They show that South Africans were more satisfied with their accommodation and neighbourhood; moreover, they acquired ownership of detached homes, which suggests a quick integration into the housing market, and they felt it was a good decision to have moved to New Zealand (Johnston, Trlin, Henderson, North & Skinner, 2005).

Similarly, the Egyptian community in Austria is one of the largest communities of Arabs, and Egyptian men, in particular, leveraged the opportunities their migration provided. Over the years, the migration of Egyptians to Austria was mainly academic, and these highly skilled individuals did admit that their migration to Austria improved their professional skills and that their knowledge can be utilized in Egypt; however, Egyptian women are less involved in Austrian society, making it difficult for them to acquire new knowledge and skills (Bacchi, 2016). A similar experience of maladjustment trajectories was documented in the study conducted by Andemariam (2007) on highly skilled African migrants in the United States. The author argues that the skilled African migrants had a challenging time adjusting to their host country and getting well-paid jobs due to the misconceptions about African migrants, including that they are naïve or that they will take the jobs meant for the locals. Other barriers include the lack of credential recognition and the fact that well-educated migrants had to take additional training in the United States to make them suitable for decent jobs.

Andemariam (2007) further argues that Anglophone African migrants have fewer language barriers compared to the Francophone or Lusophone, but the Anglophones still experience difficulties securing highly skilled jobs because employers assume their unfamiliar accent is a disadvantage; these challenges experienced by migrants make them resort to owning businesses that serve the immigrant community, primarily including the local market, and they are also noted to be involved in the local politics in the host country (Andemariam, 2007). In the same way, tertiary-educated Zimbabwean teachers in Manzini, Swaziland had a feeling of “not belonging” as a result of difficulties in getting suitable employment, a lack of job security, and their overall experience of non-integration in the labour market (Tevera, 2014). For the teachers to have a successful migration experience in Swaziland, they have to rely on the networks they keep and the integration strategies already developed by migrants themselves (Tevera, 2014). The experiences of highly skilled African migrants moving within Africa—most particularly, the feeling of not integrating in the host country’s labour market—thus does not differ from some of the experiences of African migrants in the Global North.

Several studies confirm the trend of unemployment among African migrant youth abroad. For example, Ghanaian migrant workers in Amsterdam struggle to get professional jobs in the Netherlands, even with their educational degrees are from the Netherlands and Ghana—and even when the majority also hold a Ghanaian-Dutch citizenship; the lack of professional jobs creates their outward migration, for instance, from the Netherlands to Britain (Nzama & Maharaj, 2014). Soontiens and Tonder (2014) highlight some of the reasons why skilled migrant workers are unemployed. Their research suggests that some South Africans due to their racialized positioning in Australia are lost in an environment that lacks the cultural understanding to assist them in navigating the challenges of getting a professional job; as a result, they have to take up low-paid

jobs just to gain local experience, which they argue was a costly setback (Soontiens & Tonder, 2014). In light of the global economic crisis, research suggests that migrants who are highly skilled professionals in their countries frequently end up with menial jobs in countries of immigration (Samers, 2010). For example, in Vancouver (Canada), older highly skilled university-educated migrants from Sub-Saharan African experienced downward professional mobility due to the non-recognition of their foreign degrees, compelling them to take up “survival jobs” (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). Equally, Ghanaian youths residing in Toronto are unlikely to have access to employment opportunities unless they possess high qualifications or mask their actual community (Jane-Finch) on their resumes (Zaami, 2012). Similarly, Nigerian migrant workers in Australia are left with no choice than to begin afresh, especially when their professional degrees are not recognized; this frustration is compounded as they consider taking up cleaning jobs to, at the very least, sustain themselves—yet the lack of local experience makes it impossible to secure such jobs (Ogunsiji, Wilkes, Jackson & Peters, 2012).

In the same way, Ghanaian and Nigerian migrant workers in Israel experienced similar patterns of under-employment in early 2000. These workers, despite their low-paid jobs, risked losing their jobs to an economic recession, deportation, and a re-occurrence of war between Iraq and Israel (Sabar, 2010), which has been politically instigated since 1948. Sabar (2010) further argues that despite their financial and security struggles, some migrants prefer to stay in Israel due to familial responsibilities back home, while others believe that family members in their country of origin are responsible for their hardship, particularly through using witchcraft powers in the form of evil spirits that haunt them in Israel. It is not uncommon for spiritually-inclined African migrants to interpret any sudden experience of hardship through a spiritual lens.

Aside from migrant workers' spiritual interpretation of unemployment and under-employment, it is important to note that the poor economic conditions of some Nigerian migrant workers are not related to their educational status. Two confirmatory studies on the educational achievement of Sub-Saharan African immigrants illustrate that these immigrants could potentially contribute to the development of the immigrant-receiving country. Studies in the United States show that Nigerian immigrants are highly educated as compared to the general American population, and the majority of them also hold professional or managerial positions higher than the general American population, with a ratio of 46% to 31% (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). An affirmatory study in Canada also shows that an assessment of Africa's human resources, using education as a criterion, revealed how the human capital of African immigrants is higher than the average Canadian; for instance, "about one in three African immigrants (34%) has a Bachelor's degree or greater compared to nearly one in five (18%) in Canada overall" (Loxley, Sackey, & Khan, 2015, p. 9). In addition, an analysis of the pattern of tertiary-educated migrants to OECD countries shows that in 2000, "approximately one out of every three African migrants (32 per cent) is tertiary educated, compared to 26 per cent for the Latin America and Caribbean region (LAC) and 22 per cent for Europe" (Capuano & Marfouk, 2013, p. 300).

The migration of highly skilled experts or tertiary-educated workers from their countries of origin to a destination country is called *brain drain* (Capuano & Marfouk, 2013; Soumana, 2002). The bulk of the *brain drain* from Africa to the United States between 1980 and 2010 was through student visas—but the migration of skilled individuals through the student visa is gradually decreasing, and family-based migration is another pathway to skilled migration (Wimark, 2016). The African governments are now counting the cost and loss of highly skilled

professionals from Africa, such that the Ghanaian government encourages dual citizenship to encourage expatriates to participate more in national development and build a strong tie with their home country (Beoku-Betts, 2008). Sabour and Habti (2010) described the outward migration of individuals who have no plans of returning to their countries of origin as *one-way migration*. Their study discussed how North African migrants will most likely not return to their home country due to several ongoing factors, namely political tension, poverty, bureaucracy, the relevancy of the professional degrees, and the fact that even when they desire to return, the immigrants have stronger ties in the host countries and weaker ties in the country of origin—thus, the longer they live abroad, the lesser their possibility of returning (Sabour & Habti, 2010).

Likewise, research shows that Sub-Saharan health workers in Belgium and Austria desire to return temporarily to assist in the development of the health systems in their countries; however, these immigrants noted that criminality, health and financial issues, the well-being and education of their children, war, and institutional crises are the barriers preventing their return (Pope et al., 2016). Whilst the African governments attempt to lure the diaspora organizations into developing their countries of origin, the diasporas also provide suggestions on the issues the governments should focus on which would make them more inclined towards building a strong tie with their home countries. Nevertheless, migrants may consider a return migration based on their subjective factors such as the desire to instill African culture into their children, a sense of responsibility to their country, and their belief that working in their home country is more rewarding (Pope et al., 2016).

The studies above highlight how some migrant workers from Africa desire to return to their countries of origin for diverse reasons. Other studies on African migrant workers abroad however, show how some African migrant workers are reluctant to return to Africa—and their

reasons may be related to the fear associated with working abroad. Skilled African migrants working within the African region may face other challenges which make them reluctant to return to their country. The Zimbabwean teachers in South Africa, for instance, have a subtle disconnection with their loved ones back home as they are unable to remit money due to their living experience, which they described as feeding from hand-to-mouth (Sadhana, 2014).

The experiences of African migrant youth workers, especially in terms of poor access to employment opportunities, evident in the literature review, have become the known fact that is gradually becoming a master narrative for African migrants. When no other stories are told, the dominant master narrative is perceived as the truth and thus internalized. *Master narratives* “have been largely defined as culturally shared stories that guide thoughts, beliefs, values, and behaviors” (McLean & Syed, 2015, p. 323). Master narratives derive strength from *internalization*, as the more we internalize, the more we reproduce these stories, and only when our experiences contradict the master narratives do we begin to question the origins of the master narrative, which then becomes a challenge (Molly, 2004). I recognize how differences in socio-cultural contexts in countries of immigration can produce different experiences for migrant workers; nevertheless, there is a need to make visible the migration experiences of African migrant workers in Qatar to understand the dynamics of labour migration in Qatar. The African narrative in Qatar may challenge the master narrative on international African youth under employment as well as the master narrative that focusses on South Asian migrant experiences in Qatar, as evident in the literature review in this study.

An example of how master narratives form patterns of representation is from my experience during my fieldwork in Italy, and my stay in the Netherlands. During my early days in these countries, I had no knowledge of the living experiences of African migrant workers or the

kind of jobs they have access to, but strangers approached and offered me cleaning jobs, and some made sexual advances to me with the assumption that I work in the sex industry. It is not that I had any appearance that prompted such assumptions; rather, these encounters were a product of generalized stereotypes of sex work and cleaning jobs attributed to African female migrants in those countries. I later observed that only a small percentage of African migrants in these places have well-paid professional jobs, and the majority of African migrant youth in the Netherlands and in Italy are affected by the economic recession. In Italy, for example, sex work is one of the common jobs some African female youth engage in, while others work in the cleaning industry in the Netherlands.

My experience shows how a pattern of representation is reinforced, especially when a particular narrative is widely assumed to be the single story about a specific population. The unpleasant experiences of African youths in accessing employment opportunities abroad make it relevant to study the experiences of those living in Qatar. Since the focus of this research centers on Africa youth, it is important to provide a contextual background on how youth is defined in Africa, and why the continent chooses to define a *youth* differently from the widely known Western definition. It is also of significant importance to understand the challenges faced by an African youth, and the processes that lead to their migration overseas.



### **Contextual Background on African Youth and Processes Leading to Migration**

In this section, I discuss the push factors compelling African youths to seek greener pastures abroad, and explain how the definition of youth in Africa differs from that which is widely accepted in the Western world.

#### **Defining African Youths**

Before elaborating on the factors propelling the migration of African youth to seek employment opportunities abroad, it is pertinent to define who an African youth is, and the circumstances surrounding their existence in Africa. The term *youth* is not easily defined; it is a social category defined differently across cultures (Durham, 2000; Quan-Baffour, 2015). The term *youth* is quite variable within the West, and some programs for youth extend up into the thirties. But generally, the West has the assumption of youth being younger; for example, the ages of 18 to 25 years are theorized as a unique period of “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2000). Within a given society, people with wide range of ages are treated as a *youth* or consider themselves as a *youth* (Durham, 2000). The African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006) defines a *youth* as any persons between the ages of 15 to 35. The socio-economic challenges plaguing the African continent explain why the age bracket of an African youth is extended to 35 years. The transition to adulthood extends through the ever-increasing need for young people to acquire capital by learning life-long skills and building a strong career profile, mostly acquired through a vast range of work experiences (Bynner, 2005). The transition to adulthood takes a long time in a more precarious economic environment such as Africa.

Reflecting on my experience growing up in Nigeria and being conversant with the plight of youth across the African continent, I would argue that an extended age bracket also gives youth ample time to “catch up” on what some of the youths in Africa might have missed

compared to their counterparts in the developed world. It is, therefore, emotionally soothing for the majority to cling to the title *youth* as it reduces the pressure and feelings of lack of accomplishment. In Western countries, progression to adulthood, especially by reaching the traditional markers of parenthood, stable employment, and marriage, is taking more time than previous eras, and these markers are frequently accomplished at a later age than several decades ago (Arnett, Žukauskienė, & Sugimura, 2014). Similarly, the transition to adulthood in developing countries takes a longer time considering the socio-economic challenges, including increasing needs for extremely long periods of education, as central to prolonged adulthood in the North America too. In the African context, besides age, which is a unique marker of adulthood, adulthood is mostly measured by several variables: income level, marriage, parenthood, tertiary-education, ability to assist family members financially (especially parents), purchase of landed properties, business investments, moving out of a family home, good decision-making skills, and a life of independence. Due to a high level of poverty in the continent, financial freedom is considered a strong marker of adulthood. People across the African continent identify with these markers of adulthood, and only a very small percentage of African youth can achieve just a few of these markers before the age of 30.

Though some member states in the African Union define a *youth* as an individual between 15 to 30 years or 18 to 35 years, the African Union itself, an association of 54 African countries, unanimously adopts a definition that encompasses the diversities of definitions in the African continent by defining a *youth* as an individual between 15 to 35 years.

### **Youth Unemployment: A Shared Problem Among African Countries**

Youth is a distinct phase when the desire to attain financial independence, acquire educational degrees, and make choices towards discovering a career path becomes a constant

thought. During the process, some youth residing in countries with limited opportunities and unstable economies begin to make frantic efforts to migrate regionally or internationally. Quan-Baffour (2015) provides an illustration of how some African youth in rural Ghana build up their migration desires and sometimes fall victim to human trafficking. He argues that lack of industries in rural Ghana creates a desire for youths in the countryside to migrate to the bigger cities for better employment. The lack of competent skills prevents these youths from securing a job, and returning to the countryside becomes a thing of shame. In order for youths to pursue their dreams, they begin to seek employment abroad, and in the process, they fall victim to human trafficking and overseas employment scams. Quan-Baffour's illustration most perfectly explains why there is a perception that African youth migration is a desperate move by the young people considering the circumstances surrounding their existence in their home countries. I will argue that an African youth migrate because they earnestly desire to improve their economic status and also assist their family members. Their financial responsibility and commitment place a demand on them to dream big, with the hope that they can have a better life and surpass their parents' achievements. Other factors could be personal motivation or the desire to have a good social status among friends.

Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing an upsurge of youth unemployment, and there are accusations levied against the African authorities for poorly addressing the needs of African youth (Ackah-Baidoo, 2016). The African Union (2011) instituted a Youth Decade Plan of Action (2009-2018) with the intention of reducing youth unemployment by 2% annually. Unfortunately, African leaders are still far from achieving the target, which implies that there are few job opportunities for over 10 to 12 million African youths who seek to enter the workforce yearly (Ackah-Baidoo, 2016). Besides the African Union's efforts to reduce youth

unemployment, other state governments in Africa have instituted projects to manage the situation.

The Kenyan government created a Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) to tackle unemployment, yet the problem persists due to two main reasons: youth in rural areas lack the required skills to work on the available jobs (Muiya, 2014), and there are limited financial intermediaries assisting in the implementation (Chantler et al., 2013). Other factors contributing to youth unemployment are poor development plans, corruption, mismanagement of public funds, civil wars, and structural adjustment programs (Ackah-Baidoo, 2016). Notably, young people in developing countries are the worst hit by global youth unemployment (Muiya, 2014). In Kenya, youth make up to 55% of the unemployed population (Chantler et al., 2013), while 64 million Nigerian young people are unemployed, and 1.6 million are underemployed (Adebayo, 2013). Rusvingo (2014) describes the youth unemployment crises in Africa as a ticking time bomb because the desperation among the youth could lead to an outbreak of crime and violence or regional activism. Botswana has 51.1% of youth in the labour force and 17.8% are unemployed, Zimbabwe's youth unemployment is at 86%, and other countries in Africa have similar experiences (Motlaleng & Narayana, 2014).

### **Other Push Factors Stimulating the Migration of African Youth**

Arguably, unemployment is a major reason why African youth migrate to countries with more employment opportunities, but other factors may influence their decision. Annelien et al. (2014) identified several push factors propelling health workers and trainees from Uganda, Malawi, Ghana, Nigeria, South-Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana to other parts of the world. These factors include personal and family financial obligations, emotional unrest, and insecurity in the workplace. Others include fear of personal safety induced by threats, lack of professional

support, demand for respect, lack of recognition by the management for excellent performance by workers, and lastly, the belief that they can only achieve their dreams and aspirations abroad. Ethiopian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia also identified several factors leading to their migration, which include success stories of friends and relatives in Saudi Arabia, a desire for better living conditions, academic failures, a quick process for obtaining a resident permit, under-employment, a high desire to be independent, and the death of a spouse or parents (De Regt & Tafesse, 2016). On the contrary, Ethiopian domestic workers in Kuwait provided different reasons from their counterparts in Saudi Arabia. Those in Kuwait are propelled to seek international domestic work due to a high level of urban unemployment in Ethiopia, limited opportunities in the public sector for women with secondary education, cultural practices restricting Muslim women from taking up public jobs, and, lastly, the belief that female migrants tend to remit money more frequently for the upkeep of their families (Fernandez, 2011). In support of the previous argument, the research of Kifleyesus (2012) confirms that male Eritrean migrant workers in the Arab countries earn a higher income than Eritrean women, but the women remit more money to their families' due to previous commitment and greater love for the household.

In summary, youth unemployment is a major problem in Africa (Ackah-Baidoo, 2016), and the majority of African migrants who seek overseas employment are economic migrants. There is extensive research on the migration of African youth to Europe and North America, but fewer studies on African youth in the GCC countries particularly in Qatar. This study thus aims to bridge this gap by researching on the experiences of African migrants in Qatar, their motivations for migrating, their working and living conditions, and future aspirations. The next chapter discusses the analytical tools for this study.

### CHAPTER 3: CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND STORY TELLING

This chapter discusses two of the analytical tools used in this study, notably critical race theory (CRT) and storytelling. In terms of the former, I find the insight that “race” is central to how society is stratified and intersects with other categories such as class, gender and nationality important for my analysis. I also emphasize how storytelling can allow people whose experiences are not often heard, to narrate their personal experiences particularly in situations when a single public story has become the only known story — the master narrative.

#### Critical Race Theory

The argument that race fundamentally structures a society is put forward by scholars such as Hylton (2012) who posits that “CRT’s major premise is that society is fundamentally racially stratified and unequal, where power processes systematically disenfranchise racially oppressed people... [and] some are more likely to be looking up from ‘the bottom’ than others as a consequence of their background” (p. 24). A different perspective from race being a single basis determining how a society is structured is given by Delgado and Stefancic (2012) who argue that the CRT is *intersectional*, and it “means the examination of race, sex class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings” (p. 57). In agreement with Delgado and Stefancic’s (2012) views on CRT being intersectional, I argue that the CRT is an analytical tool to examine the experiences of migrant workers in Doha in view of these multiple socially-constructed identities. The rationale for using the CRT is to understand how the Qatari society is racially stratified, paying close attention to racial hierarchies and intersections such as nationality, in order to understand the position of African youth within an unequal racial structure. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) speak to the social construction of race and assert that “race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed,

they correspond with no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (p. 8). The social construction of race as a concept produces a set of beliefs that people of a particular race (e.g., White) are superior to people of other races (e.g., people of colour) who have been perceived to be of a “lesser race”. This categorization of races is what CRT scholars call *White supremacy*. According to Cole (2009), CRT is grounded in two major beliefs:

The first is that the concept of “white supremacy” better describes oppression based on “race” in contemporary societies than does the concept of “racism”; the second is the belief in “race” rather than social class as the primary contradiction in society. (p. 247)

Mills (1997) also discusses the concept of white supremacy and asserts that white supremacy should be used as a concept rather than racism. Mills (1997) maintains that “Global white supremacy .... is itself a political system, a particular power structure of formal or informal rule, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for the differential distribution of material wealth and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties” (p. 3). The author argues further by using the term *racial contract* to analyze the concept of *white supremacy*, particularly the supremacy of Europeans, and he perceives that “it is the economic dimension of the racial contract which is the most salient, since it is ‘calculatedly aimed at economic exploitation’” (Mills, 1997, p. 32). Mills (1997) argues that the economic exploitation inherent in white supremacy produces white privilege. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2012), white privilege is when a group of people socially categorized as white benefit from social resources, primarily because they are perceived as being from an allegedly supreme race.

Though CRT is used in this study as an analytical tool, the findings of this study highlight how race intersects other inequalities in shaping the experiences of mid-to-highly skilled African migrant workers in Qatar.

### Storytelling

Somers (1994) identified four types of narratives, and among them are *public* and *ontological narratives*. She defines *public narratives* as narratives on institutional and cultural development, family, workplace, government, nation, and church. Conversely, *ontological narratives* “are used to define who we are; this can be a precondition for knowing what to do, [and] this ‘doing’ produce[s] new narratives and hence, new actions. People act or do not act, in part according to how they understand their place, [which makes] ontological narratives social and interpersonal” (Somers, 1994, p. 618).

On one hand, there are public narratives in Qatar about migrant workers, and, migrant workers also participate in producing public narratives. On the other hand, there are ontological narratives that migrant workers themselves narrate, and there are narratives about migrant workers in Qatar that are also linked to ontological narratives. These narratives are a combination of many episodic experiences put together to form a story. The experiences of African migrant workers in Qatar are missing from the extensive literature on migrant workers in Qatar. Since the master narrative about migrant workers in Qatar entails exploitation and abuse, it is relevant to examine how the minority population of Africans experience living in Qatar, and how their experiences and narratives do or do not counter mainstream, or master, narratives. When people narrate their personal experiences, they can also talk about the public narratives and how the two stories differ. During the process of story-telling, space is a meaningful analytical category that helps in the study of social life (Macías Gómez-Estern, 2013). A geographical area, such as Qatar, produces experiences on different aspects of life—including social, marital, work, spiritual or financial—and these experiences may be unique to each migrant even while being shaped by such things as the intersection of race, nationality, gender,



class etc. The personal experiences of an African migrant worker in Qatar could be different from the popular experiences of the majority of Africans in Qatar, but they could also be linked to shared experiences. According to Somers and Gibson (1994), *personal* or *ontological narratives* could be used interchangeably and they are “stories that we tell about ourselves [that] are central to the formation of our own identity and therefore influence the way we act in our lives” (p. 61). However, *public narratives* or *shared narratives* are “the stories which circulate amongst groups larger than the individuals, such as in the family or workplace... [and] various versions of a particular narrative compete within a given society at any one time” (Somers & Gibson, 1994, p. 61).

### **Master Narrative**

The circulation of a public narrative, over time, becomes a master narrative. McLean and Syed (2015) also provide interrelated principles of master narratives, namely, the principle of *utility*, which “provide[s] information about the history, goals, values, or identities of a group, and what kind of life course to expect for those in the group” (McLean & Syed, 2015, p. 323). I argue that, when a particular story is being widely shared in a given society, such a narrative could be useful towards informing the people in a given society about the prevalent master narrative. Additionally, when a particular story is being widely published, such a story could influence the consciousness of the people living in that society to the extent that the people may begin to speak of themselves through the lens of the master narrative or begin to refute the narrative. The second principle is *ubiquity*, that is, that a master narrative has to be shared by a group of people who have a shared culture, which implies a narrative can be categorized as the master narrative if it is commonly spoken about in a society. The third principle is *invisibility*, which connotes that a master narrative is widespread and, at the same time, invisible to some

groups of people because they are so imbedded in them. The fourth principle is the *compulsory nature* of master narratives, which implies that they have an ideological and moral component about how we comport ourselves or feel in a society. A narrative becomes a master narrative because it is a widely shared story that has over time been formed through a system of ideas, beliefs and behaviors and as such it has some ideological underpinnings.

The last principle is that of *rigidity*, which argues that:

master narratives are not made of stone—they can and do change—but they get their strength and their authority from their staying power... [and] their rigidity comes in part from the benefits they confer on the privileged, who play a role in their sustainability. (McLean & Syed, 2015, p. 328)

One of the essential functions of a master narrative is that it allows people to identify what the society assumes is a regular occurrence, while using the perceived normal occurrence as the basis for all stories, and a tool for comparison between personal experiences and experiences of others (Molly, 2004). However, sometimes, we may not always be able to see what is regular or dominant in a society because we are so imbedded in the society. Our attention may be drawn to what is regular or dominant in a society through the initiatives of people not imbedded in that given society. Based on the extensive academic literature and media reports on the exploitation of South Asian migrant workers in Qatar, these stories have become the master narrative. Researchers may be tempted to use this known ‘fact’ about Qatar to predict the experiences of migrant workers from other nationalities. Storytelling is a useful analytical tool for conducting research on topics that seem to have a consistent pattern of how issues are reported. This approach is vital because a master narrative might not be the basis for predicting what the present entails (Næss & Vabø, 2014). It is important to examine the current stories of migrant workers in Qatar in comparison to the previous stories.

Migrant workers working in a particular geographical location or country may have a uniform experience with regards to their working conditions. Space and time are two benchmarks common in storytelling and, more particularly, place is always imbedded in and formed through narratives (Macías Gómez-Estern, 2013). In migration studies, it is almost impossible to ignore issues of space, time, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, economic capital, language, and cultural affiliations in participants' narratives. As an illustration, research suggests that there are significant differences in migrant workers' income due to their nationalities. For instance, the Nepalese are the lowest paid migrant workers in Qatar, with an average mean of 853 QAR, followed by people from the Philippines (1443 QAR) and the Egyptians (1454 QR) (Alshawī & Gardner, 2013). One could argue that the professional qualifications of some migrant workers may not qualify them for high wages, but it is worth noting that institutional racism may account for some categories of migrant workers being poorly paid.

African migrant workers in Qatar may attach different meanings to specific experiences based on their nationality, as well as other personal variables such as age, gender, and linguistic privilege. The working and living experiences of African migrant workers may or may not contradict those of South Asian workers; however, there could be some common ground. Counter-narratives may have a shared connotation with the master narrative (Molly, 2004), or they may produce other narratives, much as discourses which "may also contradict each other, or provide alternative versions or constructions of events, objects or people" (Raby, 2002, p. 430). As Macías Gómez-Estern (2013) argues, there are multiple experiences produced in a geographical location; "space and place are regarded not as static entities or 'containers' of social

action but as dynamic constructions, shaping and being shaped by people's behaviour and the meanings assigned" (p. 197).

In Qatar and other GCC countries, identity and nationality play out in the form of social networks. This network/connection is translated as *wasta* in the Arabic language, which could also be interpreted as "social capital" (Gardner, 2010, p. 154). *Social capital* is a term coined by Bourdieu, and the authors Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) define it as "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (p. 119). The division between the experiences of natives and non-natives manifests through *wasta*. GCC nationals are privileged to have *wasta* based on familial, sectarian, and tribal affiliations, and Arab-speaking migrants by their language hold that privilege (Gardner, 2010). *Wasta* helps GCC nationals to scale through bureaucratic policies, and it is a distinctive privilege, which places them at a superior position in society.

The connection and networks enjoyed by Arab-speaking migrants "makes [other] migrants conscious of their subordinate role in [the] society, creating a more rigid class system based on nationality and race, which results in a mentality of exclusion and separation for migrants, and non-citizens" (Hamza, 2015, p. 98). Similarly, a study involving low-income migrant workers in Qatar found that cultural affiliations, ethnicity, and nationality play a significant role in shaping the experiences of migrant workers (Alshawhi & Gardner, 2013). Though immigration could equalize the workforce shortage across countries, it could also generate "discourses on identity, civil liberty, nationalism and human rights" (Modarres, 2010, p. 3). Thus, identity and nationalism play a significant role in determining how quickly migrant workers settle into their new country and can also contribute to the development of counter-

narratives among some. To elicit participants' narratives and their experiences of the different issues raised in this paper, an act of storytelling would enable people to relate their personal stories in comparison to the master narrative. According to Bamberg, (2005), master narratives do not strictly position people, but people reference the master narratives while reflecting and reforming their personal narratives. In addition, they also evaluate their positioning on the issue in question.

### **Narrative Identity**

Researchers using storytelling as an analytical method must distinguish between two things: "the storyteller as a character in the story and the storyteller as narrator" (Næss, & Vabø, 2014, p. 20). According to these authors, the narrator could mask the personal story using the master narrative to "give the self an apologetic coat when what was presented was a counter-narrative of [personal] experience or circumstance" (Næss, & Vabø, 2014, p. 20). The question that comes to mind is: how does the master narrative on the experiences of migrant workers in Doha differ from the personal narratives of African migrant youth in the same geographical space? The findings of this study show that there are times when participants' personal stories correspond more with the master narratives - particularly narratives on salary delay and inability to switch employers without a release letter from the previous employer.

This research provides a platform for migrants to reconstruct their identity outside of the preconceived master narrative. Somers (1994) coined the term narrative identity to explain how "people are guided to act by the structural and cultural relationships in which they are embedded and by the stories through which they constitute their identities and less because of the interests we impute to them" (p. 624). Through storytelling, this research will allow African migrant

youth workers in Doha to narrate their identity as they reflect on how the institutional, cultural, economic, political, and religious contexts in Qatar intersect in forming their identity.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODS**

In this chapter, I discuss how interviews are a good choice for data collection as they provide participants with an opportunity for storytelling. The main method of data collection for this study was leveraging Skype video call technology and, on very few occasions, I used a WhatsApp video call as requested by a few participants. This section provides a literature review of previous studies that employed the use of Skype as a method of data collection. I discuss how this study was conducted and some of the demographic information of the research participants. In addition, I present the methodological questions that arose prior to the interviews and how the use of Skype affected this study.

### **Use of Skype as Data Collection Method**

Skype is an Internet-based video web that originated in 2003 and has since been used by employers for job recruitment (Winzenburg, 2012). It is a free software application that transmits communication through webcam, on a computer or through a smartphone (Seitz, 2016). Skype is affordable and faster than organizing a face-to-face interview; it also provides a unique opportunity to reach participants more safely, regardless of geographical location (Oates, 2015). Travel-related expenses are not incurred (Hanna, 2012), and individuals at the opposite end of a call may find it easier to communicate when each party can see how the other responds to remarks (Winzenburg, 2012). In addition, interviewers and interviewees may feel less apprehensive during Skype interviews (Seitz, 2016), and researchers may have access to participants who are hard-to-reach (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). Other unique advantages of using Skype are that potential participants can choose the time and place that is most convenient for them (Oates, 2015), and there is no invasion of personal spaces, as participants only share virtual public space (Hanna, 2012). Research suggests that it is easier and less intimidating for

researchers to gain consent from participants on-line than when in physical contact with members (Walker, 2013). This approach also ensures that the safety of the researcher is not in jeopardy when interviewing strangers (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013).

Skype, as a means of communication, has been useful in sustaining effective communication with transnational families. Through Skype, transnational families engage in *emotional streaming* and *transnational caring* (King-O'Riain, 2015). As such, Skype is a useful method of data collection in migration studies, though it deprives the researcher the opportunity to visit the research location, make observations and document field notes valuable sources of information. Nevertheless, Skype has proven to be a reliable means of conducting interviews. For example, a qualitative study conducted through Skype interviews shows that participants who initially showed interest in a study did not disengage from the study even though some participants were not tech-savvy; rather, they embraced using Skype for the first time (Oates, 2015). Even though technology does affect communication, the extent of how it affects communication is yet to be explored (Bertrand & Bourdeau, 2010). Winzenburg (2012) suggests that to ascertain how technology does affect communication one area of exploration could be the tension job seekers undergo to create a noise-free and tidy environment for a Skype interview.

Skype has been proven to be useful for conducting research and for recruiting staff; but this internet video technology has several challenges including “dropped calls, pauses, inaudible segments, inability to read body language, and nonverbal cues, and loss of intimacy compared to traditional in-person interviews” (Seitz, 2016, p. 229). Despite these challenges, the author further identified several useful strategies including a stable internet connection, quiet room, speaking slowly, repeating and clarifying questions, observing facial expressions, nodding and asking follow-up questions, and listening to the tone of the participant.



In Qatar, as in other GCC states, there is an impoverished ethnographic literature on people who make-up the Qatari population. One of the reasons is that Qatar and the other GCC are closed countries, making them a difficult location for anthropological study (Alshawhi & Gardner, 2013). One question comes to mind: is there an ethical issue if Qatar is not welcoming of research? To some extent, Qatar is open to research, and this is evident by the presence of research institutes and international academic scholars in Qatar.

There are several research institutes in Qatar—for example, the Qatar National Research Fund and the National Human Rights Committee—which most likely may be censored by the government. Though scientific research and freedom of expression is permitted under the Qatar constitution, instructors at Qatar universities reported that they self-censor their academic work, while instructors in foreign-based universities operating in the country claim to enjoy academic freedom (Human Rights Report, 2015). All these pieces indicate that Qatar appears to welcome academic research, but the extent of their openness is not ascertained. Other factors identify that Qatar may seem to be an appropriate place for anthropological study, and that the risk is not greater than what a researcher would usually consider a risk during a research process.

Qatar has not always welcomed scientific research and journalistic investigation. As of 3 years ago, for instance, Qatar was criticized for exploiting migrant workers, but there seem to be a lot of changes in the system as a result of the criticisms. Qatar is proud of its achievements, and the country has recently opened up its borders as a tourist destination. On November 1, 2016, a new visa scheme was launched, which is called the free 96-hour transit visa for passengers of any nationality with a minimum of 5 hours' stopover at Hamad international airport, Doha. This visa implies that travelers with stops have the opportunity to stay in Qatar for a maximum of 4 days (Badawi, 2016). The free 96-hour visa for transit passengers is different from the free visa

obtained by the participants in the study. The free visa obtained by the participants in this study is a 5-year work visa and it is not actually free, as the name implies, because participants pay agents exorbitant fees to process their work permit. The “free” visa is called such as the migrant workers will have the flexibility of changing employers and the agents will provide whatever documents the workers require to regularize their residence in Qatar. The free transit visa requires no fees, it is issued at the discretion of the immigration officers at Hamad airport, Travelers have to apply 7 days before arrival and the transit visa is valid for 4 days.

The Qatari government, through the free tourist visa scheme, is passing a global message that the country has nothing to hide about the exploitation of migrant workers. A free tourist visa is an indirect approach, and an open invitation, for the world to access how Qatar is progressing on human rights issues. Even though the free tourist visa is for tourism purposes, it is almost impossible for tourists to visit a country without observing the people living and working there. The free tourist visa is thus an opportunity for Qatar to redeem its image ahead of the 2022 World Cup, and I think it is an opportunity for researchers who may be passing by to have a glimpse of the society which I did.

As previously stated, much of the literature that informs our knowledge of migrant workers in Qatar focuses on low-income South Asians who work as construction workers (Pessoa et al., 2014; Rajouria, 2015). South Asians and Arabs constitute the largest number of migrants in the GCC countries while Westerners (who mostly occupy managerial positions) and Africans are the minority groups (Hamza, 2015). The dearth of research on the minority community of African migrant workers in Qatar limits our knowledge on the dynamics of transnational migration as it relates to this population. So far, only a single academic study has been conducted with a sub-minority group of Africans in Qatar: the Ethiopian community

(Pessoa et al, 2014). In view of this, this paper draws on the experiences of several African nationals.

### **Access to Participants and Interview Procedure**

I conducted 12 interviews with African migrant workers from Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Egypt, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Ten of the participants are highly skilled with bachelor's degrees, and some have additional professional certifications from the United Kingdom and America (see Appendix D). The other two participants are middle-skilled workers with high school certificates, and one of them just recently completed a diploma course in leadership while the other is studying Theology. The sample consists of five (5) female participants and seven (7) male participants, of which four (4) of the participants are married. The married participants are living with their partners and children in Qatar. Nine of the interviews were conducted through Skype video call, while the other three interviews were conducted on WhatsApp video/audio call. The interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour. Semi-structured questions (see Appendix C) were used to elicit participants' narratives and the interview style evoked storytelling in different ways. For example, when I asked participants how they migrated to Qatar, participants narrated their migration sojourn from the 'beginning' (life in their home country) prior to migration and their narratives followed a logical chronological flow. The majority responded by explaining the series of networks (family, friends, agents, employers) that facilitated their trip and their overall experience living and working in Doha. During the interview, participants not only spoke about themselves but also narrated the experiences of other colleagues who experienced similar, different or worse situations than themselves. Overall, the participants were comfortable with me, and this contributed to how the act of storytelling was evoked. Participants narrated their

experiences in Qatar and such narratives were told in the form of a story. The qualitative methodology relying on interviews allowed for reflect on their personal experiences, and allowed me to have insight into their experiences of coming to and living in Qatar. Additionally, the act of storytelling enabled participants to share their perceptions of the experiences of other African migrant workers in Qatar. In qualitative research, the semi-structured interview yields quality data when there is a rapport between interviewers and interviewees (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006); and Skype and WhatsApp platforms allowed for the development of such rapport.

The age group of the participants is between 25 to 35 years, with the exception of one of the female participants from South Africa, who is 50 years old. A combination of convenience and snowball sampling was used to gain participants. The data was collected towards the end of December 2016 up to the middle of January 2017. I have an acquaintance from Nigeria who is currently working in Qatar, and he is a functional member of a church in Doha. The church has over 200 worshippers, and 95% are African migrant youth workers. My principal acquaintance is an active member of the youth department, and he informed the following groups about my study: members of his church, his colleagues at work, and other participants who were referred to him through the snowball technique. Interested participants contacted me through my email. I then sent out letters of invitation, and the interview guide. I also asked them to provide their Skype ID and propose a convenient time for the Skype interviews. It was during the interview session that I realized that two of my female participants were mid-skilled, and that one of these was also outside of the “youth” age category. I decided to go ahead with these two interviews for several reasons. First, despite being mid-skilled both occupied supervisory positions. Second, they had particularly interesting migration statuses. One who was from Ghana had previously worked in Kuwait for 5 years prior to migrating to Qatar and I was interested to know about her

comparison between life in Kuwait and Qatar. The other was a 50-year-old South-African and I decided to include her because, during my interviews with other participants from other African countries, they sometimes referred to how South African nationals were paid more than other African nationals. South African nationals in Qatar are few in number and sometimes more inclined to return home. I wanted to hear the opinion of the mid-skilled South African in this study about the alleged privileges enjoyed by South Africans in Qatar. Interviewing a wide variety of participants from different nationalities gave me the opportunity to know more about the experiences of more African nationals living in Qatar.

All the participants in this study are Christians, with the exception of one who has a Muslim background. In addition, all the participants speak English and various ethnic languages particular to their countries of origin and two participants speak additional languages: French and Arabic.

Capuano and Marfouk (2013) argue that research on highly skilled African professionals working as IT experts, engineers, academic professionals, teachers, and entrepreneurs is missing in the overall body of research on highly skilled migrant workers. To this end, this study attempts to fill this gap, as it draws on the experiences of participants with different professional backgrounds. The professional status of the participants varies and is as follows: Nurse (2), Teacher (1), Civil/Project Engineer (1), Site Engineer (1), Technical Manager (1), Talent Acquisition Specialist (1), Health Safety and Environment Officer (HSE) (3). One of the mid-skilled participants worked as a house-keeping coordinator, while the other worked as a shift supervisor. Due to the numerous construction works going on in Qatar, there is a huge need for HSE officers. Their duty is primarily to ensure that safety measures are put in place to reduce

work place accidents. Most African migrants particularly 50% of Nigerians work in the health, safety and environment sector.

The rationale for recruiting participants from across Africa with a wide range of professions is to enrich this study through the diversity of their experiences. The aim of this method is not to generalize the experiences of African migrant workers, but rather to identify the specificities of their migration journeys, and their working and living experiences. This paper uses the terminology *African migrant workers* because my participants come from across Africa, but I am not suggesting that their experiences are all the same. The terminology is just to illustrate that the Africans in Doha live and work together, and their national identity is not so much of a distinguishing factor because they are the minority group. These migrants see themselves as Africans in Qatar; they have developed relationships across national boundaries and their specific nationalities tend to be less important in their socialization, but they leverage it when necessary. When reporting my findings, I provide a detailed contextual background on the different nationalities of the participants, their reasons for migrating, and their work experiences.

As already mentioned, the sample for this study comprised of male and female participants. The rationale for a mixed sample is to have a broader perspective on the experiences of African migrants in Qatar. Gender is a relevant analytic factor useful in understanding the impact migration has on a particular gender, presumably, potentially gendered motivations and patterns of migrating. For example, what are the working and living experiences of a male migrant worker in comparison to the working and living experiences of a female migrant worker? What opportunities are available to migrants as a result of their gender? Does migration to Qatar bring about gender equality or inequality? Islamic countries, for instance, tend to have strict policies and limited opportunities for women, but the negative perception of women's

employment is changing, thus leading to a numerical increase of female domestic workers in the GCC countries (Al-Waqfi & Al-faki, 2015; De Regt & Tafesse, 2016).

Denzin (2002) itemized five steps on how to conduct an interpretive study: deconstruct prior conceptions of the phenomenon, capture the event, bracket, construct, and conceptualize the phenomenon. This research deconstructs existing phenomenon, as well as captures and conceptualizes the prevailing experiences of the minority African community. The interview guide for this study is based on the current challenges of migrant workers in Qatar as narrated in other studies conducted on South Asian migrant workers (Alshawi & Gardner, 2013). The questions ranged from motivations for migrating, migration patterns working and living conditions, exploitation, and future immigration plans. Participants were reassured that the information they provided would be confidential and anonymous; no monetary incentive was offered to participants, and the majority requested a summary of the research findings at the end of the study. The research findings will be sent out to participants through their email addresses in October 2017. The interviews were audio recorded, and I transcribed the data and coded with NVIVO 11.

### **Reflexivity: Challenges and Ethical Dilemmas**

My position (racial, national, gender, age, class, occupation, current country of residence) was relevant to how I obtained access to the participants and the dynamics of the interviews. I am of the same racialized African identity as the participants, and I think that this assisted with gaining access to interviewees. Qatar is a country where freedom of communication, particularly on labour relations, is being monitored. Having the same racial background as the participants strategically positioned me as a researcher that can be trusted. I believe that my racial affiliation with participants stimulated a good rapport between myself and participants, making them

believe that I would keep the details of the interview confidential and not use the contents of the interview to implicate them in any way, particularly because I ought to have their interest at heart. My occupation as a student also contributed to how accessible the participants were. The majority started by wanting to know my field of study and my career ambitions. There was an impression that the participants wanted to be a part of my academic success through their participation. I believe participants freely related with me because I am a student whose ambition is mainly academic. My national background (Nigerian) was also a factor that contributed to my obtaining access to the participants. My acquaintance is a Nigerian and is well loved among the youth community in his church and I was able to leverage his wide networks, which had a snowball effect - his networks also informed their network of friends. My national background was also a contributing factor in other ways. For example, about 40% of the worshippers in the church where the majority of the participants in this study were recruited are Nigerians, including the head pastor. People of other nationalities present at the church are used to having Nigerians around them so, as a Nigerian researcher, it gave me easy access to participants.

Being a female researcher enabled me to conduct this study because the majority of the participants were inquisitive about what prompted the study and they were proud to know that such a study was being conducted by a female. My position as a female researcher did not seem to influence the information the participants shared because the questions were not gender specific. Another personal demographic that gave me access to the participants was age. My age also falls within the same age group of most of the participants, which indicates that I can relate to their youthful ambitions. Other influencing factors were class and current national location. The majority of the participants do not have a master's degree but have bachelor degrees and many other professional certifications. As a master's degree student studying in Canada – a



country that is one of the top countries on immigration wish list for migrant workers suggests that I have some cultural capital. I assume that these factors also contributed to the willingness of participants to be a part of the study and seize the opportunity to ask me questions pertaining to how they can immigrate to Canada. My religion as a Christian was significant to gaining initial access through church-based networks.

### **Recruiting Research Participants**

At the beginning of the data collection phase, I and my acquaintance in Doha who assisted me in contacting potential participants were faced with a series of methodological questions as to what category of persons he was to approach. Even though my acquaintance was aware that my study focuses on highly skilled migrant workers, we still reflected on whether the participants should be organization-sponsored workers who came to Doha with the help of an employing organization, or free visa holder's workers who came to Doha with the help of an agent. My acquaintance was inclined to approach workers who migrated with a free visa because he assumed that organization-sponsored workers face fewer challenges in Qatar and their migration pattern will be different compared to free visa holders. However, I made a decision to include the two categories of workers in order to explore their unique challenges.

Another question that I reflected on was should potential participants be currently employed? Should the unemployed be included in this study? Considering that the purpose of this study was to document the working and living conditions of highly skilled African migrant workers who are a part of the labour force and could speak about their experiences, I was willing to include migrant workers who are unemployed, as I felt they could speak about their past work experiences in Qatar. Fortunately, during the interview process, I found out that all my participants were employed, though two of them were in desperate need of better-paid jobs. The

third methodological question we reflected on was the duration of stay of participants: how long should potential participants have lived in Doha? There was an assumption that participants who had worked in Doha for few years had more experience with Qatar laws on migration and work than migrants who came just a year ago. However, I decided to welcome both old and new migrants in order to see if there were any changes in the pattern of migration.

Data collection phase was fast; I was able to schedule Skype interview dates and conduct 85% of the interviews within 3 weeks. All the participants were excited to participate in the study. Conducting research through Skype interview comes with certain challenges, especially in a country like Qatar where migrant workers working for private companies work 6 days a week, except for Fridays—which is an off day because Qatar is an Islamic society, and the country observes Jumat prayers on Fridays.

All my participants worked 6 days a week, with the exception of a female participant who worked as a teacher. One of the female potential participants who worked as a cabin crew member had indicated interest, but later dropped out because of her busy schedule. Another female participant who worked in an embassy also indicated interest, but later declined because she was concerned about the risk of participating, even when she was assured of being anonymous. These concerns point to ongoing politics of research in Qatar. There are certain laws in Qatar that restrain residents from meddling in the private lives of others, which suggests a limitation of freedom of expression and creates an atmosphere of caution. For example, Article 331 of the Penal Code states that “whoever spreads news, photographs or comments related to a person’s private life, or that of his family, even if true, can be punished with a maximum jail term of one year and a fine of up to QAR, 5,000.” Though residents have not been told to refrain from commenting on their own lives or granting interviews, this policy suggests that residents

should be cautious pertaining to what they discuss. Qatar has been brought to the limelight due to the series of unpleasant reports in the media about migrant workers and Article 331 is just one of the ways of curtailing more information from spreading. While the participants in this study did not refer to Article 331 and my own attention was only drawn to its contents months after the study was conducted. I noted that participants only spoke about themselves and, when they referred to the experiences of others, they did not disclose their identities.

Interestingly male participants responded more promptly to my emails than female participants and I also had the impression that it was easier to schedule Skype video interviews with male participants than female participants. Female interviewees were also more likely to delay scheduling a Skype video interview due to fixing their appearance, or ensuring that they had private space for a video call. My impression overall was that female participants were simply busier than their male counterparts' due to multiple responsibilities.

Another point worthy of note was the time difference, which may also have more impact on the availability of participants. Prior to the research, I did not imagine that the time difference was going to be a challenge when scheduling interviews. There is a time difference of 8 hours between Qatar and Canada; every time my participants proposed a time for the interview, I had to be flexible to their schedules and some participants were also considerate trying to figure out a suitable time for me. Two of the interviews were conducted few hours before midnight Qatar time, while others took place during the early hours in the morning. I was also impressed at the enthusiasm of the participants, particularly when some of them scheduled interviews on days one would ordinarily think should be for merriment (Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and the first day of January). I had to limit the total number of my participants to 12, mainly because of the challenges of the time difference and the working hours, as the majority work six days a week.

It is important to also identify the willingness of participants who had no Skype account, but considered opening an account for the purpose of the interview or use that of their friends. One participant reported not having a Skype account, but he downloaded the application and installed it for the purpose of this study. A female participant also reported she no longer has an active Skype account; she is also not conversant on how to use Skype anymore, but nevertheless, she was willing to learn. Eventually, she decided to use her friend's Skype account for the call. Similarly, another participant did not have a Skype ID and he used his friend's Skype account. Two participants requested that I call them through WhatsApp because it was more convenient, as they use WhatsApp more frequently than Skype. WhatsApp is an emerging method that could be used by researchers to collect data; recently a video-call feature was launched on WhatsApp, and this makes virtual communication more accessible so that WhatsApp could gradually replace Skype. For example, some of my participants were not using Skype quite often as they forgot their user IDs or had to reactivate their account for the purpose of the interview.

I had a stable internet connection during my interviews and this minimized any break in communication between the interviewer and interviewee. I observed that Skype causes battery drain, and researchers who intend using Skype as a method of data collection should ensure to keep their battery plugged in throughout the interview session to avoid a sudden break in communication. An interesting thing peculiar to having a Skype interview is the opportunity to build rapport not only with the interviewee, but also with the family members who could be present during the interview. As such, an interviewer gets to communicate with other family members of the participants, and this could yield valuable data on the family relationship of migrant workers. For example, Skype interviews were scheduled individually with participants,

and three out of the four participants who were married called on their spouses and toddlers to say hello to me and we exchanged pleasantries after the interviews.

When an informal rapport between the interviewer and the family members of the interviewee occurs during a one-on-one interview with the principal interviewee, it raises certain ethical questions including the privacy surrounding interviews. Indeed, interviews are meant to be private and the interviews conducted in this study are private. The first male participant, out of excitement and friendliness, called on his spouse and toddler to say hello to the interviewer after the Skype interview in a secluded location in the family home ended. However, the invited spouse turned her husband's invitation down because she was busy.

A female participant who was the principal interviewee beckoned her spouse to come join the interview the moment I asked her a question about how she re-migrated to Qatar under a family visa. She felt her husband was in the best position to explain because he processed the visa for her. The couple bounced the conversation between each other by refreshing each other's memory on past events. Even when the spouse later excused himself—though he was still within the vicinity where the interview took place—he still contributed randomly to the conversation by sharing how he experiences living in Qatar. Similarly, at the end of my interview with a male participant, his wife took over the Skype conversation telling me about her intention to attend school in Canada, and asking me questions about it. In the same way, after the interview I had with a male participant who was not married, he began asking me how his girlfriend can study in Canada. Overall, using Skype video call as a method of data collection creates rapport similar to when conducting a face-to-face physical interview.

Ethical issues raised by the participation of spouses was limited as in most of the cases, the interview was over but spouses wanted to seize the opportunity to seek my advice on their

academic plans. The only spouse that contributed in the discussion was the spouse that was called upon by his wife to provide more details about her re-migration to Qatar. The spouse was also eager to be a part of the conversation because he sponsored the wife's visa to Qatar under the family visa system.

## CHAPTER 5: MOTIVATIONS FOR MIGRATING

In this chapter, I will first present the findings related to the first research question for this study thereafter I will analyze the findings in relation to other studies on migrant workers. The research findings will be presented with pseudonyms chosen by me.

### **Research Question 1: What Factors Motivate African Youth to Work in Qatar?**

Participants gave diverse reasons for migrating and the majority of them said that financial independence and professional growth are the topmost reasons. This section starts with the motivating factors narrated by some of the male participants, one of whom argues: “The main reason why I migrated to Qatar was for career growth and for financial benefit. You know things are not always the best in Africa, so mainly it was for financial gain and benefit.” (Amos, male)

Lack of good governance was a motivating factor reported by another male participant:

I always knew that Nigeria is a country that has basically no future. I’m sorry to say that, it’s my country, I love it, I am very passionate about it, but I have always known that I would leave Nigeria. The preceding governments were just as worse as the ones they took over from. I have always had it at the back of my mind that this is not something that they are ready to correct—you can see that even to this present day. (Evans, male)

When another male participant gave his reasons for migrating, one could sense that he is not completely satisfied with his decision to migrate to Qatar, as his narrative suggested, he could have opted for a liberal country if he had the opportunity to do so: “I left Africa because what I have back home would not really make me comfortable. We don’t have jobs so I came to some kind of a constrained society just to make ends meet”. (John, male)

Family ties is another push factor identified in this study. A male participant reported having two specific reasons for migrating:

I went to the Gulf because of my family back home, especially for my sister. In Egypt, girls, if they work too much, they will not get the money; they need some money for the marriage and for other stuff. I don’t want my sister to go and work and have a hard life to earn her money, so I’m trying to help her. Besides, nearly half of my family (my father,

some of my cousins and my aunt) has been living in Qatar for 15 to 16 years but my mother, brother and sister are in Egypt. (Hassan, male)

It is interesting to see how transnational family love between siblings is displayed and the inequality perpetuated through the gender wage gap, which is imbedded in the labour market. Female participants gave diverse motives for migrating but their views were not so different from the male participants. One of the female participants from Nigeria (a nurse) gave two reasons: a strong desire to travel outside of Nigeria and the search for job opportunities. Family responsibilities and financial problems are other factors stimulating international migration, as reported by another female participant:

I had financial problems; I was not working, only my husband was working and the kids were not going to school. I found a job in Qatar, and my husband said I should go. He takes care of the kids, I send money home, and they visit me once a year and I visit them in December. (Jessica, female)

Other findings show that intra-company transfer also fuels female migration:

I came into Qatar 9 years ago. The organization I was working for in Ethiopia had an opening and I was transferred. I was supposed to stay for 6 months but here I am, 9 years later. (Stella, female)

One of the female participants from Kenya noted she migrated because she got a job in the hospitality industry, while another female participant reported that she migrated to Doha because her husband was based there. Overall, the participants in this study migrated to Qatar for various reasons including financial gain, family ties, professional growth, job opportunities, and poor governance and lack of comfort in their home country.

### **Research Question 1: Discussion**

These above findings are consistent with other studies which argue that loss of jobs, lack of professional opportunities, poverty, and unemployment are some of the main reasons for youth migration (ILO, 2016; Khosa & Kalitanyi, 2015; Uchegara, 2016). As Faist (2016) argues,



“cross-border migration is a visible reflection of global inequalities in terms of well-being, freedom, security, income, wealth, business and employment opportunities” (p. 324). Lack of good governance was a motivating factor identified in this study. In part, this finding is evident in the research conducted by Labonté et al. (2015), where the authors listed the push factors reported by their respondents: namely, corruption, personal and family safety, children’s future, lack of respect from the government, personal security in the work place, and poor infrastructure.

Out of the five motivating factors put forward by Labonté et al. (2015), poor governance and infrastructure are the most relevant push factors that correspond with my findings. This suggests that the motivations of skilled, African, migrant workers to leave their places of birth are sometimes shaped by the socio-economic and political situations in their countries—and these situations vary from country to country.

Social inequality along gender lines could also be a reason for migration as indicated by Hassan, a participant from Egypt. Several studies have been conducted on the Egyptian labour market which confirm a gender wage gap as identified in this study. Said (2011) argues that gender-pay discrimination is less prominent in the government sector in Egypt, but extremely high in the private sector. Another study by Hamidi and Said (2014) argued that in the Egyptian private sector, there is occupational segregation and a high concentration of women in merely a handful of jobs, which results in pay differences rather than pay discrimination in skilled and blue collar jobs for women. The authors argue further that women in professional and blue collar jobs experience more severe pay discrimination than those in white collar jobs. Similarly, Al Azzawi (2014) argues that there has been a significant increase in the gender wage gap in Egypt in the last two decades. Assaad and Arntz (2005) examined some of the causes of this gender wage gap in Egypt, and one of the findings indicate that the gender wage gap is widened

especially in the non-governmental sector due to women's limited geographical mobility. More specifically, men are able to commute for longer hours to access non-governmental jobs, while women are not. Overall, the findings of this research support the existence of a gender wage gap in Egypt as shown by other studies.

In addition to the discussion on factors motivating skilled African migrants to work abroad, research on family ties in host countries as being a stimulating factor for international migration has been well-studied (Daniele & Geys, 2016; Flores-Yeffal & Aysa-Lastra, 2011; Wimarck, 2016). This is consistent with the findings of this study, which shows that decisions to migrate could be influenced by their kinship connections in Qatar.

One of the important findings suggests that women are increasingly becoming active economic agents in transnational labour migration. Mulder and Malmberg's (2014) study on local ties and family migration in Sweden shows that for couples with children, male ties in terms of employment in the local country reduces the likelihood of family migration more than female employment ties in the local country. Jessica's inability to secure employment in her home country led to her migration while her spouse and children stayed back. The migration of the female participant in hopes of seeking employment opportunities abroad supports the concept the *feminization of migration*, which Verschuur (2013) defines as "a specific process, namely, that of women increasingly migrating as independent workers, not necessarily with their families" (p. 150). In the same way, Oishi (2002) argues that the *feminization of migration* implies that women "are traveling as autonomous migrants and not only as dependents" (p. 2). Similarly, Piper (2010) also argues that "women are now migrating independently in search of jobs, rather than as family dependents travelling with their husbands or joining them abroad" (p. 2). Female migration is thus often about employment not family reunification (Faist, 2016).

Women are sometimes leaving their children behind, disrupting the assumption of mothers as the primary care-givers and fathers as the primary bread-winners.

Another interesting response from a John was when he said that he migrated because the economic situation in his country propelled him to come to a “constrained society.” His reference to Qatar as a “constrained society” suggest that migrant workers are not passive beings, but rather active beings that are aware of some of the more oppressive aspects of their situation.

As I conclude my discussion on the factors motivating African youth to migrate to Qatar, it is important to note that the host country’s policies on migration and citizenship have an influence on the reasons why a migrant worker may decide to move to Qatar. For example, none of the research participants migrated with the desire to marry a Qatari (in contrast to examples of marriage migration to other parts of the world (e.g. Jirovsky et al. (2015) on African immigrants to Austria Qatar’s strict naturalization laws make marriage migration much less viable.

## CHAPTER 6: MIGRATION PATTERN

In this chapter, I present the findings and the analysis of the second research question that guide this study. I discuss how participants arrive in Qatar under the *kafala* system of sponsorship either as organization-sponsored workers or workers who arrive on free visas.

### **Research Question 2: How Does Qatar's *Kafala* Sponsorship System Influence the Migration Pattern of African Migrant Workers?**

Two themes emerged from the interviews with participants in this study and this includes: 1) Organization-sponsored workers, and 2) Free visa holders.

#### Organization-Sponsored Workers

Organization-sponsored workers are recruited from their home country with valid job offers from genuine organizations. The bona fide companies take responsibility for the migration expenses. Only four of the twelve interviewees were organization-sponsored. One of these narrated how this was arranged stating: "I applied online for the position of a recruitment officer as advertised by an aviation company and I got the job. The company processed the visa, arranged my ticket, accommodation and everything" (Amos, male). One of the male participants recounted how he secured a job through the assistance of his cousin: "I applied directly to the recruiting person who happens to be my cousin; he arranged the interview for me and I passed it. I did not use the services of an agent because of my friend's experiences." (Hassan, male).

The migration experiences of the two female participants who were organization-sponsored were more complicated. Lizzy who previously lived in Kuwait prior to migrating to Qatar shared her experience:

I started working in Kuwait from 2008 till 2013 and then I had to move because the job I was doing was not actually the kind of job that I want to do. You know, when you are in Africa, you will be told 'I got a nice job for you, and then you end up here and find out that it's a different story altogether. So, I was coming in as a teacher but when I got to

Kuwait, I ended up working as a housemaid. So, from the beginning I wanted to go back home but then I thought of what's happening back home, I discussed with my mom and she said don't worry maybe God has a better plan for you. God knows, so just stay there and do whatever you have to do, God will make a way so that was how my life began in the Middle East. (Lizzy, female)

She further went on to narrate how she moved to Qatar:

After five years of working with my boss in Kuwait, I told him to release me and I got a job in a hotel. God being on my side, the manager said he was moving to Qatar to start a hotel and Qatar will be better for me. It was really difficult to change my permit from Kuwait so I had to travel to Ghana and the new company processed my visa and everything for me to come in and work as a housekeeping coordinator. (Lizzy, female)

As in the case of the participant above, internationally recruited organization sponsored employees must come into Qatar from their country of origin. When a bona fide company recruits internationally, the company is responsible for the migration expenses and it is usually frowned upon if an employee attempts to change the initial purpose of their stay in Qatar or move to another sponsor. This was the case of a Peace, a female participant who shared her experience of organization sponsorship with her African husband sitting by her side:

I moved to Qatar to work for an airline. If they give you a job, you must work with them for at least two to three years and that is when you can ask for permission to get married by sending an application to the CEO. Even at that, your request is under probability. I just couldn't stay for that long so I just quit. My pastor advised me I will always get a job but husbands don't just come; you will not always get a husband. It was worth all that, so, I just quit and I got married. (Peace, female)

At this point, my participant asked her spouse to share his experience of filing an application for a family visa because she felt he was in a better position to respond. However, they both ended up jointly responding to the question:

You know, when she quit, we were apprehensive and we were a little bit afraid because, she had to leave the country and she had to come under my sponsorship. Usually, the rule is that you can't have two visas and she has to exit and then come in...

There are three types of visas in Qatar: work (subdivided into organization sponsored and free), visitor and family visa. If an individual wants to change the type of visa he or she holds, such an individual must first exit the country and return under the desired visa. The pattern of mobility described above shows *repeat migration*, which involves a repetitive movement of a migrant worker between the host and home country anytime a new type of visa is issued.

The experiences of organization-sponsored workers as reported in this section may suggest that potential migrant workers embrace employment opportunities in Qatar but other experience suggest that potential migrant workers may also refuse employment offers from genuine organizations. Employers for example actively recruit skilled workers from South Africa though the response limited. As one participant said: “Most times my company sends an aircraft to recruit from South Africa but the flight is not always full they come back with 10 employees because the skilled South Africans refuse the contract especially if the pay is less than 10,000 Riyals.” (Jessica, female)

One participant shared his view that organization-sponsored workers are more privileged than free visa holders, because their employer makes the relocation arrangements. According to him: “Well established companies here in Doha, that’s what they do, like the ... of this world, because we have Nigerians working there. The companies went to Nigeria, approached them and brought them in and they did all the visa arrangement, picked them from the airport, gave them lovely apartments to live in but we didn’t get all that.” (Mark, male).

**Research Findings: Free Visa Holders**

Eight participants in this study arrived in Qatar on free visas that they garnered through the assistance of agents who collaborated with Qatari sponsors to issue fake job offers. Some participants were introduced to agents through the assistance of family friends in Qatar. In one instance, a male participant reported that his parents assisted in facilitating his migration:

My parents got to know that there are opportunities in Qatar. They informed me and I started making enquiries about Qatar. We contacted my family friend who was based in Qatar and he met one of his own sponsors that he has a brother who wants to come, this is what he studied. So, they said ‘Ok, we will give him a visa. (Jerry, male)

By law, migrant workers can only come into Qatar if they have a job offer from a Qatari sponsor (individual or company). A company is allotted a certain number of visas to employ foreign workers of specific professions. Due to the influx of migrant workers into Qatar, many fraudulent companies were created in order to obtain the visas allotted by the government and sell these to potential migrants:

Many of the companies existed just to sell visas because it was a means of making fast cash so that was my case. I am a nurse but the company that facilitated my visa was not into health services. They issued me a visa to come in as a carpenter, so I had to come in like that and later on I had to follow up the procedure of practicing in my field as a nurse. I had to look for my job myself, I was still under the sponsor complying with all the rules and regulations of his company but he never gave me any financial support or anything. I had to pay for everything I wanted from the company. (Jerry, male)

Two other participants shared a similar experience; one has a degree in civil engineering and the other is a computer scientist. Both said they migrated to Qatar holding a work visa showing “labourer”, which means they were recruited as low-skilled workers in the construction industry, but one of the participants was lucky enough to get a highly skilled job within 3 months. Another participant with a degree in environmental engineering (who now work as a Health Safety and Environment officer with another employer), indicated he was initially recruited as a driver. One

common thing among free visa holders is that they all claim that their real sponsors are unknown to them. As one participant puts it:

It's a cartel thing like every other way most people travel out of their country. You get to meet a friend who knows a friend who has contact with some unknown face so to say. The person that did my visa, or that I assumed did my visa, was a younger friend of my elder sister. He was in Qatar; I don't know if he is still here but what they were into then was visa racketeering.... (John, male)

Similar views were reiterated by another male participant:

A lady introduced the guy to me, may her soul rest in peace. She believed in the guy but the guy also lied to her. He has a good job but getting himself into visa racketeering is something that one would ask why he will even start doing that bullshit. He gave me the impression that I will get a job with an aviation company, so, when I came, I discovered there was no aviation job anyway. (Mark, male)

Several free visa holders reported that the tactic deployed by agents is deception. As one participant puts it: "I came in with a very high expectation. I was told so many things; I think I am one of those people that actually were cajoled believing that, when you get to Qatar, everything will be rosy. As a matter of fact, I almost left my wares, because the guy was like 'c'mon you don't need all this, you will find them in Qatar'" (Dave, male). That agents did not operate genuine companies was noted by another participant: "The companies that sponsored our visas were just mushroom companies" (John, male). One of the female participants who migrated to Qatar with the assistance of an agent recruiting international nurses had a different, more secure experience which was similar to organization sponsored:

I used to live together with my friend in Abuja<sup>2</sup>; and we are of the same ethnic group. She told me about a company who recruits international nurses. I contacted the agent; he told me to apply for a job and, when everything is successful, I will pay N350.000 (\$940.00 USD). I got the job and my employment package came with accommodation. (Linda, female)

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Some of the participants who are free visa holders with no jobs reported that it was easy for them to find a job in their field. Others had to study the Qatar labour market and identify professions in high demand; for example, there are more opportunities in the construction industry. Participants reported they had to learn how to write a resume in the Qatari format<sup>3</sup> that appealed to employers, and they registered for professional certification courses that prepared them for their desired jobs.

### **Visa Prices**

The free work visas sold by the fake companies are more expensive than the usual work visa fees. Some participants from Nigeria reported that the work visa fees paid by participants who came through agents ranged from N400, 000 (1,250.00 USD) to N800.000 (USD 2,500.00). Recently, the fees have increased to about 2 million naira (USD 6,250.00) due to the government shutting down most of the fake companies, existing ones are charging a lot to process a work visa. In addition to the fact that these migrants have to pay exorbitant visa fees to the agents, they have to pay for every service they need upon their arrival. One participant itemized his expenses:

The amount I paid for my work visa was not much compared to others. I paid 500k (\$1,350 USD). I paid 1,800 riyals for my ID and I paid in dollars because I came with lots of dollars. You have to still pay for the yearly renewal of ID, pay for exit permit, and pay for document to open an account. (Evans, male)

The Nigerian participants complained bitterly about the exorbitant fees they paid to agents and they blamed it on the non-involvement of the Nigerian government in regulating the immigration consulting industry:

We sold ourselves out to the agents because Ghanaian and Kenyan visas are quite cheaper than ours [Nigerians]. They have agencies in their countries and their government is also involved to help regulate. Some are not fully involved but at least, if something should go wrong, there is a body that can take the matter up. In the Philippines and Nepal, the government is fully involved. (Dave, male)

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<sup>3</sup> Qatar resume format must include: a photo of the applicant, current nationality, civil status and gender.

Based on the free visa holders' narratives on how difficult it is to obtain a Qatari visa, I browsed the Qatar visa center's website in Canada, applicants for tourist visas were advised that only nationals of the Philippines, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka can only be served. Nationals of over 33 developed countries are eligible to obtain a tourist visa on arrival. The website did not indicate how nationals of other developing countries living in Canada who wish to apply for a tourist visa can apply. When access to visa applications is made easier for certain nationals than others, nationals of developing countries may devise other means to migrate to Qatar. Dave, noted that, because nationals of some African countries find it easier to migrate to Qatar than to other countries, potential migrants from Nigeria visit Ghana just to obtain a Ghanaian passport fraudulently with the hope that it would ease their mobility. This section highlights the migration pattern of workers with free visas and their financial obligations.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion**

#### **Organizational Sponsored Workers**

Participants were asked how they migrated to Qatar, and their responses touched on the sponsorship system in Qatar. Recall that Qatar operates a sponsorship system and migrant workers can only come into Qatar if they have a work arrangement with an employer who also doubles as a sponsor. Four participants self-identified as being organization-sponsored workers. Peltokorpi and Froese (2009) argue that *organizational expatriates* are those sent forth from their home countries to take up an employment position abroad. Migration for work purposes under organizational sponsorship is common in Qatar, as shown by numerous studies (Malit & Naufal, 2016; Pessoa, Harkness, & Gardner, 2014; Roper & Barria, 2014). The participants in this study reported how they got employed, and that the employing organization arranged for their relocation. The responsibilities taken up by the employing organization suggest that the

employer cares about the well-being of their new employees by assisting them with integrating quickly into the host country, which could reduce the new workers' stress. The findings of this study correlate with a study conducted by De Paul and Bikos (2015), which shows how the "psychological well-being and socio-cultural adaptability" (p. 30) of expatriates who work in humanitarian healthcare increased when they had a perceived support from the host employer. Overall, participants in this study who migrated as organization-sponsored received support from their employers.

The recruitment of skilled workers from developing countries disrupts the popular argument that in their quest for migrant workers, developing countries mostly recruit the low-skilled from developing countries and transport them to developed countries to work in the mining or agricultural industry as low-skilled workers. The findings of this study instead suggest that some employing organizations are also in search of skilled labour. During the course of the interviews, Mark spoke about how Qatari employers make efforts to recruit skilled personnel from Nigeria. Another example was Jessica's discussion of the attempt recruit skilled South Africans some of whom exercised their right to fair wages by turning down job offers. This finding counters the dominant description of African youths in migration studies as those who are desperate to migrate to find greener pastures abroad (Andersson, 2016; Bradford & Clark, 2014; Monzini, 2007).

Three of the four of the participants who were organization-sponsored lacked pre-existing contacts in Qatar that could have facilitated their trip. The contrary situation however was illustrated by Hassan who got an organization sponsored job and migrated to Qatar through his cousin.

The concept of *global nomads* originated by (Bauman, 1998) is relevant for the movement of Lizzy who ended up being an organization-sponsored worker entering Qatar but had earlier worked in Kuwait. Lizzy's migration sojourn illustrates the term global nomad, which Kannisto (2014, 2016) defines as people who are involved in long-term movement, such as embarking on a three-year trip or more, between several countries. As Richards (2015) puts it, "the global nomad, is the most active in seeking contact with local people and everyday life in the destination. Their stay also seems to be more a form of dwelling, staying in local people's homes and connecting to local communication networks" (p. 348).

As in the case of Lizzy, she had lived with her employer for five years while working as a housemaid, and even when she quit her job, she was able to connect with local networks that assisted in her relocation to Qatar. Sometimes, *global nomads* (migrant workers) leverage their relationships with people (social capital) when migrating.

Overall, this section highlights the migration pattern of organization-sponsored workers; workers recruited directly from their countries of origin whose employing organizations took responsibility for their migration expenses. I discussed how such support assisted in their relocation, physiological wellbeing and integration. This section also discussed how social capital and family ties in Qatar are a useful resource for a participant to leverage. The migration pattern of some female workers was illustrated through the term *global nomads* and Pentecostalism.

### **Research Question 2: Discussion**

*Free Visa Holders.* Over half of the participant in this study are *free visa holders*, meaning they came into Qatar by their own volition through agents. All the free visa holders made reference to how they were connected to agents through their personal networks in their home country and in Qatar, as evidenced by network ties such as “my mother’s friend’s son” and “a younger friend of my elder sister,” while other participants claimed they were introduced through their friends. These migrant workers leveraged their networks to achieve their migration ambition. The participants in this study were members of wider networks, which consequently informed them of the job opportunities in Qatar, thus connecting them with agents. The participants of this study who arrive to Qatar on a free visa leveraged more of their social capital to facilitate their migration than the organizational sponsored workers. As Field (2003) argues, the two words that best describe social capital are “relationships matter” (p. 1) and social networks are thus a cherished benefit.

#### **Visa Racketeering**

A key finding that emerged in this study was also visa racketeering, as indicated by participants with free visas. All the participants who migrated on free visa said that agents assisted them in moving to Qatar, which makes agents a part of the migration networks of the free visa holders. Field (2003) argues that “networks provide the basis for social cohesion because they enable people to cooperate with one another — and not just with people they know directly — for mutual advantage” (p. 12). There was co-operation between free visa holderworkers and agents leading to a mutual advantage: African migrants had the opportunity to migrate to Qatar, while the brokers enriched themselves through the exorbitant sale of visas.

The exercises of labour intermediaries was also documented in previous research on Ethiopian migrant workers in Qatar (Pessoa, Harkness, & Gardner, 2014) and in the GCC, as Fernandez (2013) argues that “the operations of intermediaries in the Middle East are also characterized by networks of agents, brokers, and migrants who are, paradoxically, strictly regulated, yet remain in many ways ungovernable” (p. 832). The strict regulations in the GCC are evidenced through the *kafala* sponsorship system. As strict as the policy is, there are still lapses that have created a niche for the agents who have taken advantage of the system. The findings of this study suggest that the *kafala* system of sponsorship has led to the rise of visa racketeering in Qatar. Because potential workers are mandated through the *kafala* system to migrate through a sponsor, the agents, in collaboration with Qatari sponsors, capitalized on the policy. Overall, one word that best describes the fake companies that recruit free visa holder’s workers is “mushroom companies,” as John put it. I argue that the sponsorship system has also led to the rise of “mushroom companies” who are in the business of exploiting potential migrants. As Fernandez (2013) posits:

The institutional dynamics of the *kafala* not only locks in the migrant worker to a sponsor-employer, the system also persists because it allows ordinary citizens in the Middle East to profit from “visa-trading,” and the sale of business licenses to migrant workers. Historically, the value underlying the *kafala* as a regulatory institution was the insurance or guarantee provided for an unknown foreigner. Today, although this persists as a residual value, the dominant value is benefit or profit. (p. 840)

This research was conducted two weeks after the Qatari government cancelled the *kafala* sponsorship system on the December 14, 2016, and when I asked migrant workers about their perception of the new law, the majority of them said they were yet to familiarize themselves with the new law. However, one participant Dave argued “from the feelers nothing changed, old wine in new bottle.” Moreover, another participant said, “they just sugarcoat all of it and make it

sound nice to the international community. But if you leave in the system you will know it is even tougher now as compared to what we had when we came in.” (John, male)

Mark had this to say about the new law: “Stupid, stupendously worse than the former law. They are cunning; I have to be honest with you.” These quotes from my participants support recent research reported by Lynch (2016) on the abolishment of *kafala* sponsorship, in which the media outlet claimed that the Qatari changes in the sponsorship law *are* “meagre reforms” that “barely scratch the surface” (p. 1). The implication is that migrant workers will continue to live a precarious life until the new sponsorship law is further amended considering the lapses already identified. Since most of the exploitation faced by migrant workers could be linked to the power employers have because of the sponsorship system, future studies should examine what the new law entails and how it will shape the experiences of workers, and offer recommendations for practice.

The participants in this study used words like “visa racketeering” and “cartel” to describe the activities of the agents that provided the free visas. Such descriptions fit well with Edwards’ (2014) definition of *racketeering*: the “use of illegal activities to receive income ... racketeering is an attempt at a cartel, or loose combination, in which the racketeer earns the monopoly profit” (p. 220). An individual who is involved in racketeering controls the flow of economic activity and occupies a strategic position such that the possibility of exploiting the system is always present (Weinstein, 1966). The desire of agents to exploit the situational demand of migrant workers in Qatar ahead of the World Cup is evident when a few of the free visa holders were recruited as low-skilled workers, despite being highly skilled: a tactic that was deployed by agents to allow the skilled workers to scale through immigration requirements, since the visa that was issued to the broker was originally for low-skilled workers.

From the findings of this study, it is evident that the increasing restrictions by the Qatar government on cross-border mobility contributed to migrant workers who intend to work in Qatar seeking the help of intermediaries. Fernandez (2013) argues that the demand for intermediaries is heightened by the strict immigration regulations put forward by developed countries, which make it complex and very difficult for would-be migrants to move across countries independently. Qatar controls its borders through the implementation of the *kafala* system of sponsorship, yet this has not stopped migrants from devising means of migrating to Qatar, as evidenced by the experiences of the free visa holders. Restrictions on cross-border mobility do not prevent aspiring migrants; it only makes the regular migration pattern costlier, thereby motivating people to explore the irregular patterns that are diverse, multifaceted, unsafe, and equally costly (Gathmann, 2008; Kyle & Koslowski, 2001).

**Discussion: Visa Fees**

The respondents in this study equally complained about the costly prices of the free visa and how the fees for migration are dependent on their nationality. The free visa fees paid by the participants in this study are similar to the fees identified in the study conducted by Fernandez (2013) on how the agents in Kuwait and Lebanon demand between \$1,200 USD and \$2,500 USD from employers for the recruitment of migrant domestic workers (MDW) and the prices are dependent on the nationality of the MDWs. For instance, the recruitment of Filipina domestic workers is less expensive than of Ethiopians (Fernandez, 2013). The argument by Fernandez (2013) is also similar to the finding identified in this study that in the Philippines and Nepal, the government is fully involved—that is why their visas are cheaper. When governments seem to be fully involved in the regulation of intermediaries, there are still problems in the implementation phase and sometimes there are occasions when specific agents do not comply.



For example, the Nepali government took some steps to prevent the exploitation of potential Nepali migrants, as it banned the agents from charging fees—yet the agents still charge \$1,500, which is against the law (Rajouria, 2015).

In the case of Ethiopian migrant workers, Fernandez (2013) shows how there is a regulatory failure on the part of the Ethiopian government in monitoring the regulation of intermediaries that facilitate the migration of Ethiopians to Kuwait, Lebanon, and Saudi-Arabia. The underlying situation fueling high visa fees for aspiring migrants was highlighted by Ganji (2016), as the overreliance of manpower agencies in Qatar on agents to help recruit aspiring migrant workers creates “a type of auction” where agents bid to secure work visas; in the process, the manpower agencies and private employment agency (PEAs) enrich themselves even before the recruitment of workers. As such, the agents pass on the bills to aspiring migrants who, in turn, pay steep recruitment fees.

The existence of both organization sponsored and free visa migrant workers in Qatar is dependent on their sponsors, who have to continually take responsibility for renewing the residence and work permits of workers, and the non-renewal of residence permits exposes workers to be undocumented, which could lead to the expulsion of the worker. The dependence of migrant workers on their bosses, sponsors, or someone occupying a privileged position could be dated as far back as several decades ago as a practice in the GCC. This finding supports the study conducted by Ganji (2016) showing how after paying the agency fees, Nepalese workers were also obliged to pay for other documents required for their migration. An example that was given was a “demand letter,” which is comparable to an employment letter, which was previously issued to the workers. A common theme that emerged from the narratives of free visa holders is that the agents deceived them about the high availability of jobs and cash flow.

Consistent with the reports documented by Chaudhary (2017), aspiring Asian migrants to Qatar still migrate through the help of agents, despite the stories of the deception and misinformation given to aspiring migrants about job opportunities in Qatar. The reason for such continuous migration, according to Chaudhary, is the poor living conditions in their home countries and some belief that a good or bad migration experience is about luck.

### **Pentecostalism, Faith and World Rewards**

Religious beliefs were dominant in the narratives of those who were organization sponsored as well as those on free visas as both groups referred to how their Christian faith guided their migration decision. It is essential to note that about 9 people out of the 12 participants in this study believe in a branch of Christianity called Pentecostalism and I am also a Pentecostal Christian. There were several instances in this study when participants made reference to their belief and for this reason, I provide a brief background on what Pentecostalism denotes.

The rise of Pentecostalism has been traced to the twentieth-century. Pentecostalism highlights that the Holy Spirit is a person that was given by God to guide humanity, and the Pentecostal doctrine advocates for a personal and progressive relationship with God. Pentecostalism preaches a life of constant prayers, and intense faith and hope in God. With this background, other studies (Hocken, 2015; Holm, 2015; Palmer, 2014; Stephens, 2016) argue that Pentecostals believe in holiness, the second coming of Christ, revival, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, divine power, the love of God, and energetic praise and worship sessions. Based on the characteristics of Pentecostalism listed above, the Pentecostal doctrine encourages people to anchor their hopes on God's love, and that God can make all things beautiful for them. As Yong (2012) interprets:

There has also been inordinate emphasis on what might be called the power dimensions of the Christian life—signs, wonders, miracles, deliverance, healings, etc. —to the point that in some circles those whose lives do not feature such characteristics but their opposites instead (i.e. sickness, disability, poverty) are marginalized as lacking faith. (p. 116)

In view of this, Lizzy who comes from a Pentecostal family embrace the doctrines of Pentecostalism (strong faith and perseverance), which was reiterated by her mother in saying that God had brought her to Kuwait for a purpose, and that God would make it work, even though the participant was deceived into working as a maid by an agent. Individuals who attend Pentecostal churches also hold their leaders in high esteem. Some leaders of Pentecostal churches are known to be charismatic prophets who are the senior pastors in their churches or work independently (Daswani, 2016). Peace explained how she followed her pastor's advice when she was at a crossroad as to whether she should get married without the approval of the CEO of the company she worked for and risk being repatriated, or delay her wedding dreams and continue with her job. Her pastor, who is the founder of his own Pentecostal church, advised her to do the latter, and she obeyed, which led to her migration in and out of Qatar yet an illustration of the term *global nomad*. This finding suggests that Pentecostalism contributes to the migration decisions of migrant workers, thus indirectly contributing to global nomadism.

## **CHAPTER 7: MODALITIES OF EXPLOITATION**

I present the findings and the analysis of the third set of research questions that guide this study including five modalities of exploitation identified in the narratives. These modalities of exploitation were categorized by me based on similar experiences reported by participants when I asked if they felt exploited.

### **Research Question 3: Are African Migrant Workers Exploited, and if so, What Are the Different Modalities of Exploitation?**

It was important to ask my participants if they feel exploited working in Qatar. The majority of the participants did not feel exploited and took some extra time to think if they ever had any experience of exploitation. Even though the majority of the participants did not explicitly say they were exploited, some gave examples and scenarios which led to the identification of the five modalities of exploitation discussed below. These are: 1) difficulties switching employers and changing sponsors; 2) disparity in remuneration between different nationalities and working conditions; 3) exploitation of low and middle-skilled workers; 4) salary delay; and 5) job insecurity.

#### **Modality 1: Difficulties of Switching Employers and Changing Sponsors**

The migration experiences of the participants in this study varied depending on their pattern of migration and the networks that facilitated their mobility. The findings of this study show that the possibility of obtaining a release letter is influenced by the pattern of migration embarked upon by a migrant worker. The majority of the respondents have switched jobs or sponsors more than twice and a few others would like to switch their sponsors in the near future but they said it is a difficult thing to do. Respondents who had less difficulty in switching

sponsors were free visa holders who migrated to Qatar through agents who did not offer real jobs. According to a male participant:

It was easy to switch to another sponsor because it was a business for the sponsor that brought me to Qatar. He wasn't giving jobs, he actually wanted people to come up and say I have found a job I want to shift to another sponsor. He will say 'ok, I will shift you to another sponsor as long as you have no trouble with him, the company or the government. (Jerry, male)

Participants who were recruited by a genuine company directly from their country of origin said it was a more difficult task for their employers to issue a NOC even though some of them eventually got the certificate. One participant argues:

It's not that easy to move or change companies in Qatar because of the sponsorship law. But God's grace just finds itself along the way; that's all I can say, I can't really say how it happened. I was given a termination letter; I went to the church, prayed and fasted and they called me and issued a NOC. It just happened. (Amos, male)

A female participant from Ghana who is not satisfied with her present employer, and would embrace any opportunity to leave, shared a similar experience of difficulty: "They [her employer] don't give no objection certificate. I have worked with my company for 3 years and the new law in my company says you have to work for 5 years. If I work here for 5 years, they can conveniently issue a release letter other than that it is war" (Lizzy, female). Similar views were put forward by a participant "It's not easy in the Gulf to change; it's not easy at all. If you want to change you need to get approval from the owner of the company, he signs and it's not easy to make such things. I need to change but I signed a contract to work between three to five years, less than that I have no ambition at all". (Hassan, male)

Another female participant Stella attested that it was not easy for her to get a release letter from her sponsor; however, after she did, she decided to work only for international organizations because they follow the international laws operating in their countries. Other

findings indicate that local companies in Qatar who do not wish to provide employees release letters to switch to other employers may sometimes use deceptive tactics:

For instance, last month (November) my colleague got a job offer and he went to ask for a NOC, the company asked him to resign and then they will give him. So, he resigned on the last day of his notice then they said no they are not giving him so they have to send him out of the country. He lost double ways and it was the same company that gave me a release letter. (Amos, male)

Overall, participants who came to Qatar through agents obtained release letters more easily than organization-sponsored workers who experienced greater difficulty.

### **Discussion: Difficulties Switching Employers and Changing Sponsors**

This study's findings show how African migrants who are organization-sponsored workers found it extremely difficult to switch employers, as their employing organizations would refuse to issue a "no objection certificate." This is consistent with previous research on the difficulties of low and middle-skilled South Asian migrant workers in obtaining a "no objection certificate" that allows them to switch employers (Gardner et al., 2014; Rajouria, 2015). The major finding of this study was in regard to how a migrant worker's pattern of migration influenced their possibility of obtaining a release letter. Migrant workers who are free visa holders reported that it was easy for the fake companies to issue a release letter for them to find real jobs elsewhere, which is consistent with the findings of Pessoa et al. (2014); these authors found that Ethiopian migrant workers in Qatar paid higher fees to agents to obtain a "free visa" that allowed them the freedom to switch jobs. The findings of this study then suggest that while those with free visas may suffer from visa racketeering avails they have more freedom to switch jobs once in Qatar, while the otherwise better supported organization-sponsored workers in have less freedom to switch jobs risking repatriation if they attempt to leave their initial sponsor. An organization-sponsored worker who did receive a release letter, attributed his success to his faith

in God, along with praying and fasting. Recall that the majority of the respondents in this study believed in Pentecostal doctrines.

### **The Influence of Pentecostal Doctrine on Migration**

Pentecostal churches are known to have charismatic pastors who preach the word of God with great power, and many have come to have a positive spiritual life through this religion. Studies on Pentecostalism and migration have noted that “in contemporary Pentecostal discourses the developed countries [are] the new 'promised lands' for desperate Africans in search of material fortune [and that] prayer and prosperity are culture of the movement [Pentecostalism]” (Kwabena 2014 p. 75). Kwabena argues further that the focus of “Pentecostal persuasion is on supernatural intervention [which] feed into the needs and discourses of migration” (Kwabena, 2014, p. 78). In the case of Amos quoted above he worked toward ‘supernatural intervention,’ one of the focuses of Pentecostalism, as evidenced in his narrative.

. In part, this finding supports the research conducted by Obadare and Adebani (2010) titled *Visa God*. The authors reported that an official of the British High Commission in Ghana spoke on a radio station and was concerned about how potential migrants from Ghana take the names of the consular officers to shrines and churches to pray for a spiritual influence, to pray that God should touch their hearts so they can issue visas. A supporting study also illustrates how potential migrant workers in Ghana go to churches to seek prayers for their migration aspirations (Kwabena, 2014). One such church gathering is the Pentecostal Prayer Camp at Edumfa in the Central Region of Ghana, where potential migrants bring their international passports for the charismatic pastors to pray for their visas to be granted (Kwabena, 2014). Similarly, Van Dijk (2004) visited a Pentecost Prayer Camp in Ghana, and a member of the church gave a testimony that he got a five-year visa to the United States; when he did, the pastor opened the page of the

visa and went from row to row showing off the visa, and encouraged other church members that God could do a similar miracle for them.

Van Dijk (2004) argues that some Pentecostal pastors are not only delighted about the manifestation of the success and prosperity doctrine of Pentecostalism, but that when these individuals travel, they will send a thanksgiving offering to the pastors thanking them for the prayers. This is not surprising, as my participant had to go to church to pray—perhaps, to remind God of his promises and to pray against any evil. The reason why Pentecostals seek spiritual help and devote time to prayers is also an offspring of one of their beliefs in the existence of evil. This is also consistent with the findings of other researchers (Galia, 2010; Kwabena, 2014) which show how African migrants in Egypt who are faced with unemployment, and those in the U.S and Europe who are yet to regularize their stay and have problems filing for a permanent residence in their host countries, may sometimes attribute their problems to the attacks of witches or evil relatives in their home countries.

In the case of Amos an emphasis on faith and prayer is partially linked to the feeling of powerlessness in the face of top-down, seemingly arbitrary institutional systems. The participant has no other option than to pray and hope for a divine intervention. On the other hand, engaging in prayer and fasting could be one of the approaches a migrant worker can utilize when facing problems. Another approach, for example, is going to the court if the worker feels his employer is violating one of the laws regulating labour relations.

Diaspora organizations who work closely with Qatar national human rights organizations are platforms where migrant workers advocate for their rights. However, the possibility of a radical social movement in Qatar is very slim, which is why some migrants focus more on their social groups, and in the case of many of these participants their church. The church is not only



about prayers but is also a platform to relate with other migrant workers. When Amos went to the church, he not only engaged in prayers but also got advice and encouragement from other church members who also experienced a similar situation or knew someone who had gone through the same situation. The church is a place where information about the new developments in regard to the working and living laws in Qatar is being circulated and disseminated by migrant workers.

### **Other Challenges of Organization-Sponsored Workers**

While Amos an organization-sponsored worker received a release letter, other participants had not yet experienced such a ‘miracle.’ Of interest was Lizzy and Hassan’s experience. These examples illustrate that migrant workers are bound by an employment contract that mandates them to work for a certain number of years before they can change jobs. This is supported by Rajouria’s (2015) study on Nepalese migrant workers in Qatar, which explores how Nepalese participating in construction projects for the World Cup site in Qatar were prevented by their employers from returning to their homeland to mourn their families, who were victims of the earthquake, until they completed their contract. Similarly, Van Unen (2015) reported on Nepalese workers who were restricted from going back to Nepal to visit ill relatives but for the intervention of a human rights organization and Nepal embassy. Ganji (2016) also argues that some migrant workers in Qatar experience forced labour, human trafficking, and needless detention, which is a product of the *kafala* system which makes workers dependent on their sponsors for their residency. Highly skilled, mid-skilled, and low-skilled workers are all open to potential exploitation.

This explains why Stella who eventually received her ‘no objection certificate’ decided to only work for international organizations in Qatar: because their employment contract is more flexible, making future movement to other jobs easier. This is consistent with the findings of

Froese and Peltokorpi, (2013) on the experiences of organizational expatriates (OEs) and self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) in Tokyo. The authors argued that SIEs had lesser job satisfaction because they work under the supervisors in the host country. From my participant's experience, her narrative suggests that working for a local organization in Qatar exposed her to several difficulties; on the other hand, international organizations in Qatar with headquarters abroad increased her employment satisfaction. The denial of migrant workers from switching employers reflects coercion inherent in the sponsorship system. Renkiewicz (2016) posits that the *kafala* system practiced in Qatar leads exploitation and human trafficking, which contradicts the UN Trafficking Protocol:

[T]he recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. (p.729)

In part, the experiences of migrant workers in this study include the deceptive tactics deployed by agents, abuses of power by the sponsors, and the inability for migrants to switch jobs, and are potentially abuses to the employment rights of workers.

### **Modality 2: Disparity in Remuneration between Different Nationalities and Working Conditions**

Participants were asked if their nationality or religion has an influence on their working experiences or employment opportunities. Only one participant strongly stated that his nationality as an Egyptian avail him many opportunities:

As an Egyptian man, we have lots of opportunities because most of the Qatari people the old Qatari learn in Egypt but not the new generation. I will not say because I'm an Egyptian but from the Arabic people: Lebanon, Syrian, Egypt and Jordan, Egyptians are the most honest of them; they are caring and are hard working. The Egyptians are ok here I think; the people here are treating them in a very good way. (Hassan, male)

The majority of the participants said that their nationality was more of an influencing factor on access to jobs, workplace politics, and remuneration. Particularly, participants reported that there were disparities in remuneration based on nationalities:

When it comes to salaries in this region, salary range is on which nationality you are. If you are from the West, your salary is higher than any other region. So, they pay according to where you come from. So, like, for instance, if you are holding a U.S passport, they are just confident that, even before you start working, you already know what you are doing. They are still that backward because they've been under colonialism for some time so they just trust anything that comes from the British, Americans, Canadians, and the Australians. (Amos, male)

A female participant from Kenyan reported a hierarchy of nationalities in the academic sector: "I will be treated differently if I get an American passport today. We have Americans in our schools, we have British, we have Filipinos and Indians. I am paid more than a Filipino, but a British person is paid more than me" (Peace, female). Other experiences on racial and salary-based discrimination in the classrooms were shared:

I have a very close Nigerian friend; she got promoted to a principal level - kindergarten principal. She gets less salary than a classroom teacher but she is a principal. Being an African here, an African with a passport from Africa you have to work 50 times better than this other people with these other passports. But, anyway, you know when you learn how to live with some things, it doesn't really bother me, it doesn't define me, they don't define who I am. It doesn't mean that because they judge me with my nationality I am going to do less, I will do even more and, trust me, some of those people come to my class to ask questions: 'How do you go about this? How did you do it?' (Peace, female)

She further narrated that, even though employers in her present school did not treat her differently based on her nationality, she feared being treated differently by parents:

It's quite different working here as a teacher. Most of the parents believe that only the British, Americans and Australians, because of the accent, are those who are really able to teach the children. But, as I told you, most of them confuse Africans to be black Americans so me I don't go explaining myself. If you ask me if I'm an American, I say yes, I'm an American, that's it, finish! (Peace, female)

The same participant narrated how parents who bring their children to school have a positive relationship with her, which gave the interviewer the impression that they were nice to her because she took on a fake identity, claiming to be an American—the preferred identity by parents: “At the level of the parents, I have not really had any complaints; they are really nice and good people to relate with. They bring their young ones to school, and they want you to take care of them so they want to be more of friends with the teachers” (Peace, female).

Nationality has been one of the consistent factors influencing the salary range of workers, access to accommodation, relationships in the workplace with employers or parents. Even in the housing sector, the findings show that renting accommodation in Qatar is very expensive and some house advertisements list specific nationalities as preferred tenants. Other findings indicate it could be more difficult for certain nationalities to get an apartment:

Where my nationality plays out is if I want to get an apartment. It’s a well-known thing that, if I want to rent an accommodation, they won’t give to me as a Nigerian but they prefer to give an Indian. It’s not like the crimes Nigerians commit here nobody else commits. That is where racism comes into play because they blow that of Nigerians out of proportion. (John, male)

The participants in this study did not experience any form of discrimination based on their religion as Christians. Besides the discrimination in remuneration, participants also spoke about discrimination in employment opportunities and advertisements: “For religion, it has nothing to do with it, but for nationality, yes. when you look at vacancies, it indicates Europeans only, Americans only or Arabic speaking only and that means my nationality is an impediment in some ways” (Dave, male). Similarly, to the views above, a female participant reported how her effort in finding another job has been frustrating:

I observed that they like the Filipinos in general. When I walk into a clinic to submit my resume they inform me they want Filipino nurses; even on the vacancies on the internet they indicate Filipino. You know, Filipino visa is easy to get from the government and

it's cheap. They also don't mind taking low wages and even if their salary is delayed, they won't talk. Unlike Nigerians, we talk. (Linda, female)

A participant took a minute to reflect if he experienced any form of exploitation. He goes:

Exploited or being exploited it's a relative term. Relative in the sense that what I'm earning now, if I am earning it back home in Nigeria, I am one of the biggest guys. But, when you look at where you are working as against the people who are your managers or people who earn more, you find out you are being exploited because of your nationality. I know a South African that is doing the same job I'm doing - he's earning 3 times my salary and he does not have the qualifications I have. If I look at it from that angle, I will say I am exploited because I should be earning more than him. (John, male)

Based on his narrative, I asked the same participant if he was experiencing racism. He was quick to say:

I won't call it racism. It's more or less like them believing the fact that the Western world are more exposed or experienced. Racism simply means you regard this other person to be inferior to you but they are not saying we are inferior they are only saying we are not well equipped to do the job. it's not racism, it's more of the fact they feel more comfortable with this person's decision based on experience and exposure as compared to we Africans. If we have the skills and they are still looking at us with a colonization mentality that's when we will look at it to be a racial thing. (John, male)

It is quite interesting to see how the participant associated his feeling of exploitation with his nationality and, at the same time, he recounts how the employers are justified if they treat him differently based on his lack of experience. Another participant talks about feeling injustice but she started off her conversation with the impression that her employment position shields her from being exploited but does not shield her from being discriminated against. She argues:

I have been lucky not to experience exploitation maybe because of the position I occupy. But we experience systemic racism that has to do with the payment of salary. I work six days a week with the exception of Fridays but, if you have a European blood in you, the company allows them two days off every other week. (Stella, female)

When I asked the only Arabic-speaking Muslim participant in this study if he feels exploited in any way, he was quick to speak positively about the Qataris: "No, I don't feel cheated. Qatar is

better than Egypt; the salary is much bigger than what I earn in my country.” (Hassan, male). Even though the above participant spoke positively about him not being cheated in Qatar, he was worried about the health challenges he may face as a result of his job but he masked his fears by providing an ambiguous statement claiming to like’s his job and at the same time he doesn’t:

Anything related to civil engineering, anything you can see with your eyes I can do it. Even if you want to make a concrete or steel like a dog I can do it. I like my job a little bit but I don’t like all of it.....I don’t like anything really. This job is very difficult, you put a lot of effort maybe after 10 or 7 years I will get some diseases I know because there is a lot of pressure. What can I say I’m enjoying it. (Hassan, male)

Another participant John alleged that South Africans are treated better and that some are paid higher than other African nationals are. During my interview with a participant from South Africa, I informed her of my findings and asked if South Africans are paid more than others are. She said that the findings were true and she gave two reasons:

Yes, because of dignity of their citizens there is an agreement of labour between Qatar and South Africa and they treat South Africans well. South Africans don’t want to be oppressed; those with a degree refuse to take a salary of 4,500 riyals but those without a degree can take it. Skilled South Africans will rather suffer than take the money, even when we come into Qatar, people know South Africans will resign after 6 months or one year sometimes they feel lonely. South Africans who are above 40 years can suffer in Qatar just to earn some money but the younger generation can’t obey the rule of not drinking liquor ... we call them Mandela kids; they got rights. (Jessica, female)

The stringent laws in Qatar reduce the retention rate of South African youth in Qatar. My participant referred to them as Mandela<sup>4</sup> kids because they actively evaluate their migration decisions in relation to their human rights. This section highlights how African migrant workers in Qatar experience discrepancies in remuneration and employment opportunities based on their nationality. It also shows how nationality is more of a major influencing factor on the working experiences of migrants than race. It is important to note that, even when African migrants

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<sup>4</sup> Nelson Mandela, a former head of State in South Africa. Mandela, pioneered the anti-apartheid revolution and he was a human rights advocate.

experience discrimination based on their nationality, these migrants could also be discriminatory against certain nationalities. For example, a participant said:

The Filipinos are racist. When we are discussing something at work, they don't take my idea even if it's a good idea; they think you are stupid because you are black. Another thing is that we have a big pantry in my office when some Filipinos or Chinese bring their food, it smells; I think its fish or egg it smells bad. It's very difficult to eat with them on one table. (Jessica, female)

Even though African migrant workers in this study seem to be at the receiving end of racism, they, in turn, perpetuate racism. This suggests that racism is not one way, but it could be bidirectional. Participants were asked if their gender influenced the kind of opportunities available to them. Some of the participants stated that their gender was not an influencing factor while others were of the opinion that women have more opportunities. A male participant strongly believes that females have more opportunities:

It's easier for women to find jobs in Doha because women are being pampered and adored. A woman is a weaker sex, she is fragile, she has to keep herself, and you have to find a way for her not to work too much. It's easier for a woman to get a job because she will not easily retaliate, fight or tell the boss I'm not doing this or I'm not doing that. If I were to be a woman, I will have better opportunities; I will be working in a hospital not as a company nurse." (Jerry, male)

A female participant gave a different view on women being equally employed in an industry dominated by men. According to her,

There are jobs some employers won't give to females even if they don't find a male applicant. For instance, I have a nursing degree and a diploma in occupational health and safety but many employers won't recruit me as a site nurse because there have been some rape cases in the past. (Linda, female)

It is important to note that this same participant reported how she constantly had sexual stares in her work place and when waiting at the bus-stop to use the public transportation. Overall, the findings of this study show the precariousness of work in Qatar, the division of labour and levels of gender inequality.

### **Discussion: Disparity in Remuneration between Different Nationalities and Working Conditions**

The analytical tool for this study is critical race theory and it is applicable to the analyses in this section, but, in many ways, is less salient than the concept of *nationality*. One of the major findings of this research shows that nationality has been one of the consistent factors influencing the salary range of workers, their access to accommodation, and their relationships with employers or parents. Critical race theory (CRT) is also an important tool to examine what it entails to be African in the Middle East. According to Cole (2009), CRT is grounded in two major beliefs: white supremacy and race as being means of social stratification and oppression.

Other authors argue that *interest convergence* or *material determinism* shows how racism promotes the interests of “white elites (materially) and working-class Caucasians” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 8). The findings of this study show that white supremacy is prevalent in the Qatari labour sector. Participants reported that there were disparities in remuneration, and that migrant workers who are Westerners with a Western passport are paid higher than the Africans who hold African passports. More so, other findings suggest that race is not the sole basis of social stratification but nationality is also a discriminatory factor. The findings of this study suggest that nationality is a basis of discrimination as evident in the favouring of non-white Westerners and the Filipinos in the nursing professions. Other basis of discrimination shows the hierarchy between different African nationalities, that is, South Africans are higher in the hierarchy while other African nationalities are paid less.

In part, race is a useful analytical tool to illustrate the social inequality evident in society, which further illustrates the fundamental argument of some critical race theorists in their analysis of the social inequality. For example, Hylton (2012) argues that “CRT’s major premise is that



society is fundamentally racially stratified and unequal, where power processes systematically disenfranchise racially oppressed people” (p. 24). The findings of this study show that people from the West are favoured, and this favouring is linked to white privilege and supremacy. The preferential treatment given to White people fit into the description: white privilege produces white supremacy, leading to social inequalities. Faist (2016) argues that “social inequalities consist of the uneven distribution of costs and benefits with respect to goods among social units such as individuals, groups [and] such goods may be in terms of economic (i.e. income) or civil such as rights and citizenship” (p. 325). Migrant workers from the West or Africans who hold Western passports leverage their citizenship status, which, in turn, produces economic benefits such as earning more than other workers with weaker passports, as illustrated in the narratives of the participants in this study. The privileges enjoyed by Westerners who work in Qatar could be because of the title ‘expatriates’, which is commonly used to describe Westerners who work abroad (Kunz, 2016).

Kunz (2016) describes the ambiguities of the term *expatriate* and argues that, in the concept of the *expatriate*, “lie complex configurations of racialization, gender, class and nationality often involving problematic reproductions of the colonial past” (p. 89). Qatar got its independence from Britain in 1971, and the preferential treatment given to Westerners could also be a “reproduction of the colonial past” as indicated by both Kunz (2016) and a participant (Amos) in this study who explained how Qatar is still under the influence of colonialism. The Qatari employers assume that migrant workers from the West are well informed about the available job and have the skills, even though these Westerners may not have the experience. The devaluation of the skills and competencies of African nations who are former colonies of the West is a reproduction of colonial history.

Nationality then is useful in understanding how being Western or having a Western passport gives migrant workers in Qatar a privileged position regardless of their race. A migrant worker's nationality could be a powerful force of discrimination as evident in Peace's illustration when she states that, if she had an American passport today, she would be treated differently. In the same way, she claims the identity of a Black American teacher in order to be treated well by parents who prefer Western teachers. Her experience shows that nationality is more powerful in the hierarchy than race. Her experience raises questions about the relative importance of "westernness" versus "whiteness" in Qatar. The teacher's experience shows that "westernness" is more important than "whiteness" in certain work environments in Qatar.

The privilege enjoyed by certain nationalities in Qatar calls for a reflection on the racialized hierarchy in Qatar. Qataris are at the top of the hierarchy, followed by GCC nationals, Arab nationals, then Westerners, followed by highly skilled Africans/highly skilled South Asians and then low-skilled South Asians/low-skilled Africans at the bottom. Class intersects with these hierarchies; for example, low-skilled South Asians and low-skilled Africans are at the bottom because they are lower skilled. However, low-skilled South Asians are given more priority over low-skilled Africans because they have been integrated in Qatar for longer.

The privilege enjoyed by certain nationalities is a reflection of the bilateral ties between Qatar and other nations. For example, Qatar and the United States, over the years, have developed strong diplomatic ties evident by the presence of the largest U.S. air force base in the Middle East and six American universities, all located in Qatar. The hierarchy among African nationals, which situates South African nationals in the upper hierarchy, suggests that Qatar is building new international allies and strengthening its diplomatic relations. Within the African region, South Africa is one of the countries with a stronger economy and it is the only African

country in the G20. South Africa enjoys the privilege of being a member of the G20 and such privilege extends to its nationals. For example, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2017, Qatar launched a one-month visa on arrival for South African nationals (Sarma, 2017).

All the participants said there are discrepancies in both remuneration and job opportunities because of their nationality, but did not interpret their experience using a race perspective and their narratives suggest they found it difficult to conceptualize what racism means. According to Ying Yee (as cited in Baker, 2013), “racism is a social construct, [but] it does carry meaning within contemporary society, thereby influencing the ways in which individuals interpret and define the term” (p. 78). For example, we see this in how John does not see racism. One could imply that this respondent has a false consciousness about his geographical positioning – what it means to be an African in the Middle East – hence; he finds it hard to admit to any form of racism in the work place. White supremacy has been so normalized in today’s society that even when the impact of white supremacy is evident in the lives of Black people, they sometimes are unable to identify it. Another surprising trend is that this same participant was able to identify racism in the housing sector. This is also consistent with the findings of Bristol-Rhys (2012), who found that that the housing sector in Qatar is polarized by nationality and civil status. In this scenario, the findings suggest that the participant may be more prone to identify an act of racism perpetuated by non-whites than people of Western origin may.

John found it difficult to understand the term *racism*, which is also similar to the findings of the study conducted by Baker (2013) on minority refugee youth in a predominantly White city in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Two of his participants had a challenging time understanding the term, and they also did not recognize that people perceived them to be different because they recently moved from a country where they were a part of the majority,

which even makes the term *racism* unfamiliar to them. Such interpretation is also put forward by Baker, 2013, arguing, “it may be assumed that, without general knowledge of racism, individuals cannot comprehend the meaning of racism in their lives” (p. 79). Even though the participant in Baker’s study could not conceptualize racism, the unpleasant effects of racism were evident in their narratives. John, could not conceptualize the term, yet he narrated a series of discrepancies he faces. It is important to note that John was the most vocal of all the participants, and he tirelessly pointed out the inequalities in Qatar and how other low-skilled workers are exploited.

Stella was the only one female participant that narrated her experience of systemic racism in her place of employment, as she claimed that people could only benefit from extra days off work “if you have a European blood in you.” Stella’s experience suggests that race is moving beyond physical appearance, and the colour of our skin, to an invisible marker – blood. Potentially, such a categorization may extend to the creation of other kinds of blood: Asian, African, or Middle Eastern blood, whereby someone with the superior blood (White) can rule over others (Africans or Asians). This is just an illustration of Marable’s (1992) definition of racism, “a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people based on ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color” (p. 5). To sum up, Audre Lorde (1992) may have produced the most concise definition of racism, as she defines it as “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance” (p. 496). Some of the findings of this study shows the perceived superiority of one race over all others but the majority of the discrimination identified in the narratives of migrant workers shows the assumed superiority of the West over others.

Peace reported that she internalized the negative assumptions of her colleagues who think that she is not competent. Eventually, she worked harder not to fall into the stereotype threat and her Western colleagues came asking for advice from her. The results of this study are consistent with the study on Black nurses in Australia, which showed how patients refused to be treated by Black nurses. The nurses' colleagues also discredited their credentials and capability; this resulted in these Black nurses putting in more effort not to conform to the stereotypes, and eventually they earned the respect of their colleagues, who later came asking for assistance (Mapedzahama et al., 2012). This finding suggests that race is a performance, and is an example of how people with stronger passports display their superiority of knowledge and competency, whilst African people with weaker passports refuse to conform to the stereotypical discussions on African people; and feel that they have to work twice as hard, which is an injustice in itself.

The racial hierarchy reproduced within Qatari practice suggests the pernicious effects of colonialism. In part, race intersects with colonialism, particularly when non-Western migrants are discriminated against based on their nationality being a former colony of a Western country. Nationals of Western countries are presumed to have the technical expertise and African migrant workers who hold Western passports are treated as being equal to the Western nationals themselves suggesting that the latter with the foreign passport have the same expertise as the Western workers. African migrant workers who hold African passports are to work harder - as Peace puts it "50 times more". The question that comes to mind is: Must Black people prove their competency? The racial inequalities documented in this study confirm the analytical tool guiding this study, which posit that *old racism* "is the belief that race is the primary determinant of traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race" (Baker, 2013, p. 78). From a post-colonial lens, I will argue that the experiences of African

migrant workers in Qatar in regard to passport discrimination leading to disparity in remuneration shows the effect of colonialism on Qatari labour market.

An interesting finding that emerged was when some female participants, particularly Peace, acknowledged that Africans receive higher salaries than Filipinos, but lower than the Westerners. Parreñas (2001) also talked about the “hierarchization of racial subordinates in society” (p. 176); her study highlighted how Filipina domestic workers in Italy claim that they are more preferred to domestic workers of other races, like Latina and African colleagues, because they are neat, hardworking, can offer quality services, could speak English, and are not thieves. In addition, the Filipinas claim they are paid higher than the Bangladeshis and Peruvians (Parreñas, 2001). The author also argues that other examples of hierarchies based on nationality reported in Italy also depict Polish women as “lesser whites” (Parreñas, 2001, p. 177), positioning Polish women to be socially inferior to people of Italian origin or to Northern Europeans. The finding of this study confirms the existence of hierarchization of racial categories. The preference of Filipina domestic workers in Italy over other races is also consistent with the findings of this study whereby Lizzy explained her frustration in trying to get a job because the adverts specifically recruited for Filipino nurses. As is the case of this study, the preference for Filipina nurses is that it is assumed that Filipinas are not outspoken, unlike the Nigerians. This finding shows the discriminated in the Qatari labour market, which points to the intersection of race and assumptions about temperament – in this case being vocal.

### **Health Challenges of Workers**

Other findings of this study highlighted exploitation and safety. The findings suggest that skilled workers can also be vulnerable, even if the majority does not name their exploitation as such. An example was when Hassan masked the health challenges he is exposed to because of

his job. Although he was not involved in physical labour, Hasan was a construction site engineer and his job required him to visit the construction sites and supervise manual workers and, thus, expose him to heat stress and other job-related illnesses but not as much as that of the manual labourers. This also supports other studies on Nepalese construction workers building the stadium for the World Cup, who said that the work is difficult and increases the rates of heart attacks, stroke, and eventual death (Gibson, 2016; Renkiewicz, 2016). For this reason, Combe (2016) anticipated that the death figures of migrant workers working on the World Cup amenities is estimated to be greater than the total number of soccer players that would participate in the World Cup. Johnson (2015) argues that, due to job stress, an estimated over 4,000 deaths will be recorded during the construction of the World Cup project and about 1,200 workers have passed away since 2010 – a recent death was that of a British man who died due to work related accident (Mullin, 2017). Overall, the narrative of the participant who masked the health challenges he is exposed to because of his job supports other findings on how migrant construction workers are vulnerable to illness and death, because low-skilled workers are at far greater risk.

### **Gendered Pattern of Insecurity**

An attempt was made to identify if there was any gendered pattern of insecurity of opportunity in Qatar. The finding that was evident in this study as put forward Jerry indicates that migrant women in Qatar have more job opportunities though this argument seemed debatable between participants. Of an interest was Jerry's narrative who claimed that women are of a weaker sex and mostly obedient to their bosses. Such a description of women points to the idea that women are "docile." Ameeriar (2015) conducted a study on immigrant nurses in

Canada and she argued that “women, particularly those of color, are expected to perform Westernized notions of docility and deference to be marketable on the global stage” (p. 469).

Particularly, Ameeriar (2015) claimed that Asian foreign-trained nurses who would like to reside in Canada are indoctrinated with a pedagogy of affect management, and during the training classes, the nurses had to learn skills on how to “suppress anger, resolve conflict, and become subservient, which suggests a fear that the immigrant woman is anything but an obedient subject” [and that these women have to frame themselves to fit the] “cultural notion of natural passivity to become legible workers” (p. 469). As in the case of this study, the perception of women’s “docility” by Jerry reinforces the idea that women are ‘obedient subjects’ and their passivity makes them employable.

The perception of women’s “docility” and passivity in the workplace and submissiveness to their bosses, as depicted by Jerry, reinforces the notion of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Currier (2013) refers to Connell’s conceptualization of *hegemonic masculinity* to mean “a form of masculinity that is mostly valued in a society and is rooted in the social dominance of men over women and nonhegemonic men,” while *emphasized femininity* is “the pattern of femininity which is given most cultural and ideological support ... patterns such as sociability ... [and] compliance” (p. 706). Narratives such as Jerry’s perception of women’s docility create an impression of hegemony in the workplace and that the female gender is complaint through submissiveness.

To conclude, this section presents the modalities of exploitation faced by mid – to-highly skilled African workers. Their experiences illustrate how nationality and colonialism are important concepts in understanding the discrimination that they reported. I argued that the Qatari policy on labour relations is influenced by post-colonial beliefs hierarchizing a nation and



its nationals over another. In addition, I used critical race theory to explain how white supremacy manifests in the Qatari labour force which is also an effect of colonialism. I analyzed the health challenges of workers and how participants could mask their experiences of exploitation; however, from their narratives come ambiguous quotes. Lastly, I discussed the limited findings on the position of women in the Qatari labour force. The findings are limited in the sense that, the sample reporting on the role of women in the work place and how women are perceived is not substantial and as such the findings cannot be generalized. The next modality of exploitation reports on the narratives of mid-to-highly skilled workers about the exploitation of other migrant workers.

### **Modality 3: Exploitation of Low and Middle-Skilled Workers**

When participants spoke of direct exploitation they tended to focus on the experiences of others, most especially other low and middle-skilled workers. For example, some described witnessing the exploitation of others and in some cases, offering assistance as Amos stated:

I haven't felt any exploitation but, for others, it's something that you see. I'm living in a society where there are different kinds of people and you come across a lot of issues. People will come to me asking for money and then you ask, 'Why you are asking me for money?' They start telling you they haven't been paid for the past three to four months; I don't receive my salary on time... for the lower level, it's really tough. (Amos, male)

Similarly, a female participant said that she had not experienced any exploitation but she referred to her friends who were recruited as low and middle-skilled workers. In her words:

I have never felt exploited but I hear what they do to people. I have an advantage because I'm under my husband's sponsorship so I can change jobs anytime. I have friends who work in other places, they are under paid, and they work 6 days a week and for longer hours. Sometimes they work from 5 or 4am, the companies don't pay by hours they pay by salary and it doesn't matter if you work overtime and the companies don't follow the contract. They give them different salaries and jobs different from what they stated when they were recruiting them. The people who exploit them are agents. (Peace, female)

Highly skilled workers who were more established in their home countries prior to migration are more likely to rebuff any exploitation by agents. For example, a participant spoke about how he escaped being exploited by agents and how agents took advantage of other migrants:

I was very lucky; firstly, I didn't come broke. I'm a boss back home and I came ready to go back if my stay is not ok. For others who had nothing back home, they were able to manipulate, kick out and make them go through a whole lot of stress and at the end of the day they didn't get their ID. Anyway, God has been very faithful; my testimony is that of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego<sup>5</sup>. (Mark, male).

Another participant counted himself lucky not to have been involved in menial jobs. The participant explained how other migrants recruited by agents ended up doing menial jobs:

I started like every other Nigerian who had to go out there to struggle although I didn't do Sogo. Sogo<sup>6</sup> in Arabic means work, common work, but they use it here commonly and it is typical among labourers. When they say what are you doing? you will say this is my Sogo. That means you are not doing a good job; you are just doing an abstract job or something out of the job description that brought you. (Dave, male)

This section shows interviewees willingness to discuss how low and middle-skilled workers experienced diverse kinds of exploitation.

### **Discussion: Exploitation of Low and Middle-Skilled Workers**

While the participants in this study did not admit to facing exploitation, they often pointed to the experiences of other low and middle-income African workers, referencing how they worked for long hours, received low wages, were deceived by agents and victimized by job switching. These experiences are similar to the exploitation faced by Nepalese low-skilled workers on construction sites. In multiple studies (Alshawhi & Gardner, 2013; Amnesty International, 2013; Johnson, 2015; Rajouria, 2015), scholars argue that some Nepali migrant workers sponsored their trip to Qatar and paid exorbitant fees to agents; however, upon their

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<sup>5</sup> The three Hebrew men in the Bible: *Shederach, Meshach and Abednego* were tied and thrown into the blazing furnace. The Bible recorded that the angel of God delivered them, the fire did not hurt the young men and they came out from the blazing furnace. This story is recorded in the Holy Book, Daniel Chapter 3, 12-29.

<sup>6</sup> Sogo means manual work or low-skilled job.

arrival, the jobs they were initially promised were not what was given to them. Job switching is experienced by some high and low-skilled African and South Asian workers.

Particularly, Dave spoke about the exploitation of sub-contracted workers who work in the construction industry. *Sogo* is an interesting concept that emerged when Dave spoke about the experiences of other migrants in Qatar who were recruited by the agents and ended up becoming labourers. Ganji (2016) explains reasons for the exploitation in the construction industry, as there are many instances of contracting and sub-contracting, which gives room for exploitation. Endo and Afram, (2011) explain the migration cycle of workers from their country and reasons for their exploitation, as well. The authors argue that contracting or subcontracting firms who work for larger corporations, such as Qatar Rail or other state institutions that need foreign nationals to fulfill a position, will first seek permission from the Qatari Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) to get approval to hire workers from a particular country. After the approval, the firms subcontract the hiring process to private recruitment agencies (PRAs) who are licensed by the Qatari government. These PRAs, in turn work, with agents in respective home countries to source local aspiring migrants. Faist (2016) argues that the transfer of workers from recruitment agencies to brokers and then to employers could be exploitative. This illustration explains why some migrant workers who came through brokers ended up doing *Sogo*.

Overall, this section presents the vulnerabilities experienced by low and middle-skilled African workers, which are also similar to migrant workers from South Asia and leads us to the fourth modality of exploitation identified in this study.

### **Modality 4: Salary Delay**

The findings of this study show that many companies in Qatar do not have a proper structure or fixed date as to when employees should expect their salaries. Most of the participants in this study complained that their salaries are not paid on time and this problem varies from one company to another. According to a participant: “In my previous company, there was a structure; you get paid every 25<sup>th</sup> but in other companies I have worked there is no specific date when you are paid” (Stella, female). Another participant argues: “Sometimes, it comes on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and one time it came on the 30<sup>th</sup> of the next month” (Lizzy, female). Another participant put a similar view forward but he argued that free visa holders are more vulnerable during their early days in Qatar: “Some companies pay early while some will owe for like 2,3,4,5 months. The fake company that employed us does not pay us so you can be here for one year with those ‘kind’ [unusual] visa, they will not pay”. (Mark, male)

One participant who works in a well-known construction firm explained how the delay in the payment of salaries affects his physical and social well-being. In his words:

Today is the 31st and the company has still not paid last month’s salary. I’m so depressed; I have no money to buy gas in my car to take me to work. I have no money to renew my mobile data and for my upkeep. I’m unable to fulfill my responsibilities to my family or make an investment. The most frustrating thing is that I am working yet I always don’t have money when I needed it the most. (Dave, male)

Though the participant above was emotionally disturbed about the delay in his salary, another participant was not so bothered because it was not the usual practice in his company. Moreover, he considers it a global problem:

This problem happens everywhere in the world. This is the second year that I’m working in this company, I’ve been here for 1 year and 8 months, the salary was not delayed but, in some situations, now the salary is delayed for 20 days, 10 days or 5 days but, no problem about this, they are giving us our salaries. If the company is not paying salaries, the government is taking action. (Hassan, male)

The results of this study show that both mid and highly skilled and low-skilled workers in Qatar experience a delay in receiving their salaries. Amidst this injustice, Mark stated that the government is against such acts:

To be fair to the system, the government frowns on it but it's the supply<sup>7</sup> companies. The government says you must complete a percentage of the project before they pay the companies. The government expects them to take loans from banks, pay staff or run their company pending when they get money from the government. Some of the employers don't do that. I have two guys who were supplies<sup>8</sup> to my company; they are just cleaners, they've been working for the past 5 months - no salary. (Mark, male)

A participant who works in one of the well-known construction firms reiterated similar views to the previous participant, drawing attention to how the government expects companies to get loans from the bank to pay off worker's salaries; however, unfortunately, sometimes the banks refrain from giving out loans to companies. A participant who is highly skilled challenged why I called him highly skilled because he felt that his identity as a highly skilled worker does not exclude him or his friends from experiencing a delay in salary. The difference is that skilled workers can most likely make a legal case with their employer:

...but the skilled ones oh be sure they would have taken them to court. The way you say skilled workers, who are the skilled workers? I'm supposed to be a skilled worker but some of these laws affect us too. I have friends who are safety officers as well who don't get their salaries on time, they get it in the middle of the next month or a month and that is the way it is you can't change the system. (John, male)

A few of my participants never had a problem with their salaries being delayed. For example, a male participant noted, "for my level, I haven't faced any issue when it comes to payment or anything. So far, the companies have worked for all of them are big international companies, all the salaries always come on time, earlier than the actual pay day, two or three days before the

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<sup>7</sup> Sub-contracting firms

<sup>8</sup> Contract workers in low-skilled jobs

pay date” (Amos, male). The participant’s narrative above may suggest that migrant workers who work for international companies are paid on time; however, this is not the case for a female participant who works for an international organization who reported that her salary is delayed. Another participant who did not experience a delay in her salary is a participant who works for a government-owned company.

### **Discussion: Salary Delay**

A key finding of this research is that many companies in Qatar do not have a proper structure or fixed date as to when employees should expect their salaries. All the participants in this study, with the exception of two, said that they receive their salaries late. Renkiewicz (2016) attributed the delay in salary to the Kafala system of sponsorship, which creates a power imbalance such that the employer holds more power and employees are vulnerable to exploitation, poor salary, delayed salary, or non-payment of salaries. The findings of this study support that of Ganji (2016) and Beauchamp (2015), who argue that migrant workers face abuses and non-payment of salary, which sometimes prevents them from reporting to work and which is an attempt to flee the exploitative practices. According to Amnesty International (2013), if a migrant worker does not report to work, sponsors are mandated to report such absenteeism to the Ministry of the Interior, who coined the concept *absconding* as a term used to categorize workers who refuse to show up to work. Workers who abscond are liable to a fine, could be deported, or face other sanctions relating to criminal charges. To make matters worse, when a migrant worker absconds, the Ministry of the Interior Search and Follow Up (SFU) goes after the absconded migrant, ignoring the reasons why the migrant fled from the sponsors (MOI Rounds, 2013). From this analysis, it appears that migrant workers are constantly vulnerable to exploitation. The approach

taken by the Qatari government views migrant workers who refuse to show up to work as criminal suspects who have broken their employment contract.

As indicated earlier the Qatari government instituted measures to guide against delay in the payment of salary such as the wage protection system. The participants in this study also acknowledged that the government frowns at delays in salaries. Despite the war against salary delay, such exploitation is still very much present among the participants in this study. Particularly, participants who work in the construction industry explained why there is a possible delay in their salaries. The findings of this study are also consistent with the claim of Bhatia (2015), who argues that construction firms shift blame to the government, who they claim delay in executing payment for contracts, which then causes a delay in workers' salaries. Sambidge (2010) argues that 64.3% of complaints received on delay in salaries in 2010 was from construction workers. Sambidge (2010) further argues that salary delay was the topmost reported complaint, totaling 3,875 out of 4,000 complaints brought to the Ministry of the Interior. Seven years after the complaints on salary delay were filed in 2010, the findings of these study show that salary delay is still a significant problem and that the government is contributing to the problem. On the other hand, findings show that the contracting firms just withhold salaries unnecessarily. One question that comes to mind is, since the government instituted these penalties against employers who delay salaries, why then do migrant workers not file a complaint? Even if they do, the government, who is to uphold justice, also lags in the prompt disbursement of funds to contractors. Yet participants in this study are strongly on the side of the government; they believe that the government has mandated employers to have sufficient money to pay their staff.

It is important to note that the delay of salary affects well-being, as Dave complained of being depressed. Research suggests that expatriates who perceive they are not adequately supported by their host organization may emotionally detach from their host organization, leading to psychological distress (Dunlea, Sojo, Thiel, & Westbrook, 2015). It was also surprising to me that a few other participants did not see the delay in salary as a problem. This suggests that the participants with this opinion are comfortable with the exploitation in as much as their salary is being paid on the long run, and it is also higher than what they would have earned in their home country. The generalization and normalization of salary delay should be critiqued in view of global inequalities in labour rights. Several studies (Pessoa, Harkness, & Gardner, 2014; Rajouria, 2015; Sambidge, 2010) have been conducted on the exploitation experienced by low-skilled workers, particularly regarding how South Asians experience delays in salary. This study shows that there is a commonality of experience in terms of delay in payment of salaries between the low-skilled South Asians and highly skilled Africans but the difference is that the highly skilled are bold enough to file a complaint. However, none of the respondents in this study reported that they filed a complaint.

This section discusses one of the modalities of exploitation identified in this study. The findings suggest that salary delay is a common challenge faced by the majority of the participants in this study. In the next section, I present the findings of the last modality of exploitation, which centers on job insecurity.

### **Modality 5: Job Insecurity**

Even though all the participants spoke positively about their physical security, they all shared the same opinion of job insecurity in Qatar. For example, a female participant (Stella) asserts that “there can never be job security in the Middle East; you don’t have permanent



residence so nothing is secured”. Organization-sponsored workers are more vulnerable to job insecurity than free visa holders. Migrant workers can lose their jobs with no fault of theirs as a participant narrates:

You can just get up one morning and your employer tells you your job is *kalas*! That’s the word they usually use, it’s over, *kalas*, and they don’t need you anymore. Most often, they don’t pay you end of contract benefit and they just tell you blablabla, the company is in bad shape, they have some financial difficulties, they cannot keep you and you have to terminate your contract with them and since it is a sponsorship business they terminate your visa too. (Jerry, male)

Similarly, another male participant argues “I can say Qatar is one of the safest places [physical safety]. However, in terms of job security it’s not the safest place because you can lose your job in a twinkling of an eye without any valid reason and you got no one to report to.” (Amos, male)

From these narratives, it is obvious that job insecurity is a shared vulnerability by migrant workers most especially organization-sponsored workers.

### **Discussion: Job Insecurity**

A key finding in this study highlights the precariousness of work in Qatar. All the migrant workers in this study reported how their employers can terminate their contract at any time without fault. The precariousness of work reflects the Qatar sponsorship system that gives the employer power to hire or terminate workers at free will. The sponsorship system is also an offspring of Qatar’s policy on immigration, which does not issue permanent residency or citizenship to workers except if the President (Emir) authorizes, which is a rare case (Naufal, 2011). Stella’s narrative of job insecurity is consistent with other findings on job precariousness experienced by South Asian migrants in Qatar. A Nepalese Trade Union (Gefont) activist named Aai Bahadur Khatri who used to work in the Middle East claimed that “Qatar is the world leader in precarious work” while reflecting on the poor wages and exploitation of low skilled Nepalese

workers (Van Unen, 2015, p. 1). Similarly, (Salazar, Timmerman, Wets, Gato, & Broucke, 2016) considered the experiences of IT migrants and other sport migrants in Qatar, drawing examples of how they have a sports career of over 30 years in length and they have never had a contract for more than 18 months, with no guarantee of renewal of contract in the industry. According to Salazar et al. (2016), these workers have “no guarantee of more work, or that such work would be of greater duration and thereby produce a semblance of stability,” and such “precariousness drives the production of their mobility” (Salazar et al., 2016, p.30). Overall, both skilled and low-skilled workers in Qatar are vulnerable to job instability, which is also consistent with the experiences of British migrant workers in Oman (Walsh, 2014).

In this chapter, I discussed the five modalities of exploitation I identified in participants’ narratives. The findings suggest that skilled workers can also be vulnerable workers. Examples of such vulnerabilities are: (i) when particularly organization-sponsored workers find it difficult to change jobs because their employers rarely issue no objection certificates to employees; (ii) discrepancies in remuneration based on nationality makes workers vulnerable to exploitation. For example, migrant workers who hold similar employment positions and have the same scope of work are paid differently based on their nationality, which suggest that migrant workers with weaker passports are paid less for the same job as a migrant worker holding a stronger passport; (iii) exploitation of low skilled workers by employers and agents; (iv) workers’ salaries are mostly delayed unduly and this act disrespects their personal plans, for example it caused emotional distress for one of the participants in this study. Withholding workers’ salaries, even when workers must have worked their hours fulfilling their part of the contract, is exploitative; (v) job insecurity is linked to the kafala system of sponsorship which makes workers dependent

on their sponsors for their residency. The next chapter presents the findings and discussion of the last research questions.

## **CHAPTER 8: COMMUNICATION ACROSS BORDERS, REMITTANCES AND FUTURE AMBITIONS**

This chapter is divided in two parts. The first part focuses on how migrants keep in touch with relatives back home and the second part discusses future ambitions of the participants.

### **Research Question 4: How Do African Migrant Workers Keep in Touch with Their Relatives in Their Homeland? And Do These Migrants Envision Themselves Returning to Their Home Country at the End of Their Contract?**

#### **Keeping in Touch Through Telecommunication and Remittances**

All the participants said that they communicated with family members in their home countries. A participant further explains how family members assist him in supervising his investment projects he embarks on in his home; however, family members sometimes extort money from them. He argues:

There is nothing that can really separate us whether distance or anything. Almost once or twice in a week you give a call to speak to your brothers, siblings and everyone. You also send some support and then you also try to do some projects. There is always a challenge that comes with involving family members. You don't always realize the best profit cos it's like you are not on the ground so if they decide to cheat you, you can never know. (Amos, male)

This study identified several other reasons why participants are in touch with their siblings. For example, a female participant said:

Sure, I do. I do keep in touch with them being the first child I have lots of responsibilities so I have to help my younger ones to make sure they have the best education that I don't get. On a monthly basis, I send money to contribute to their education. (Lizzy, female)

A male participant also argues that the expectation from Africans who work overseas is high:

For us Africans it's like a normal tradition, you are supposed to send something; this is big brother, big cousin, uncle and you are supposed to send money to them. You are living overseas; they think you have more money so if you don't send money back home they will consider you to be stingy. (Jerry, male)

For this participant, sending remittances is a tradition which has to be religiously followed, an obligation he has to fulfill. I asked him if he thinks sending money home will impact any of his personal projects that may involve monetary investment. He responds: “That’s a difficult one; of course, it’s going to impact my own personal project. I don’t think there is another way out, I have to send the money back home especially when I know they need it” (Jerry, male).

Several other participants acknowledge communicating with their families very often especially their mothers. An example is a participant who argues: “Yes, I’m calling my mother every day, every day I’m talking to my mother and talking to my sister and sending money every month to them. That’s a normal thing that any man will do” (Hassan, male). Other telecommunications such as WhatsApp and Skype has made it easier for participants to keep in touch with family members particularly the mom. A female participant explained that she is more comfortable entrusting her personal projects in her mother’s care:

I call them through Skype or through WhatsApp. It’s very easy now to communicate with them. Actually, I speak with my mom almost every day; I do send money, as Africans we have to send money back home. I send some money to my dad but if I want to do something a project I think I will put it on my mom. It’s better and I trust her. (Peace, female)

While most of the participants all said that remittance is an obligation, only one participant in this study feels she is not obliged to remit money home. According to her: “No, I don’t have any obligations to send money to anyone. I am lucky not to have anybody that depends on me so I only send money home if I want to do any charity” (Stella, female). To conclude, the findings show that most of the participants shared the same belief that remittances is a mandatory duty. This section also points out very strong connections with family members back home, besides sending money. The next section discusses the future ambitions of the participants in this study.

### **Future Ambitions**

Participants talked about their professional and migration ambitions for the future. For example, a female participant explains:

I see myself owning my own hospitality company. Yeah, I have already started a business with friends, we began selling African fabrics. My dream is to visit as many countries but I still see myself in Qatar trying to build on my business. I can visit places but to permanently stay there that will be for the next chapter of my life maybe after my marriage I will know where. (Lizzy, female)

The narrative above shows how an organization-sponsored worker became an entrepreneur even though she still works in a hospitality industry. Another participant reiterates a similar entrepreneurship ambition; for him, living in Qatar gives him the platform to migrate to other countries. In his words:

I want to start my own business, a manpower company. We always plan to migrate to other countries, Canada, the USA, or Australia. Qatar is a place that you can't get a passport, you can't get citizenship but it's a place if you are in that place, you can easily get a visa to any country that you like. (Amos, male)

Career aspiration is a common factor for the majority of the participants; this is also evident from the narrative of a male participant who stated: "That is difficult but they say man proposes God disposes. I would have loved to be somewhere in Canada or in the U.S. I can easily find my way and adapt somehow and I think it's one of the best places for me to practice my profession" (Jerry, male). Another participant spoke about his migration ambitions and that of his friends. Lack of job security and the strict naturalization rules that prevent workers from becoming citizens motivates participants to migrate to other countries. The participant argues:

95% of the friends I have here will not stay here in the next 6 years, they will leave. The society doesn't give you enough assurance that you going to stay. Some other countries, you spend four or five years they are already thinking of giving you indefinite stay because you are contributing to the society but here no matter how important you think you are when it comes to push or the Gulf they take you out of the system. (Mark, male)

Another participant had a different reason for wanting to leave Qatar. She explains:

My family and I are really planning to migrate because of the children; education is very expensive here; the primary and the secondary school. Education here is just different being that it's an Arabic country. Most of the teachers here apart from now are not professional teachers. Educational wise they are a little bit far behind. (Peace, female)

Marital reasons in another motivating factor stated by a participant: "I should be moving to the States soon. My husband is there so I want to go there otherwise I will be divorced" (Stella, female). As the narrative above illustrates, the majority of the participants would like to migrate to specific Western countries, but only one participant planned on returning to her home country in the near future to support the young adults in her home country:

You know we don't have skills [black South Africans] we are limited, and there are so many problems with our youths. I passed my grade 12 and I did not have anybody to help me so I could not go further. I'm studying theology not that I want to be a pastor but I want to be a counsellor, I also want a degree in social work and youth development and I know the government will employ me. (Jessica, female)

In this section, I reported on remittance attitude of the participants in this study, how they keep in touch with relatives and their professional and future migration ambitions. In the next section, I will discuss the findings in relation to the research questions and previous studies conducted on migrant workers.

### **Discussion: Keeping in touch through telecommunication and remittances.**

All the participants in this study said that they constantly communicate with family members, particularly their mothers, through phone calls, WhatsApp and Skype. As observed by Derby and Adkins (2012), sometimes, international migration does not weaken the ties between family members in home and host countries. Family members often communicate through frequent phone calls, email, text messages, and sending money to one another and as such, they remain devoted to their relationships for years (Mahler, 2001; Parreñas, 2001; Ritter, 2015;

Wilding, 2006). A key finding in this study is that the participants remit money home frequently because they considered it an obligation which is at the expense of their own comfort, especially when it is obvious to them that the funds are needed at home. Tevera's (2014) study on Zimbabwean migrant teachers in Swaziland indicates that despite the challenges and feelings of not belonging created by the discrimination in the Swazi labour market, these migrant teachers are still able to remit cash and goods home and boast of a higher income in Swaziland compared to working in Zimbabwe, while also maintaining steady communication with families in their home countries. A study on the remittances of Ghanaians living in Bijlmer, Amsterdam shows that Ghana migrant workers are caught up between remitting money home, which involved them trading off their personal plans in order to fulfill their multiple commitments, to the healthcare, education, and livelihood of the families in the home country (Nzama & Maharaj, 2014). An example was Jerry who claims he must send money to his uncles, nephews, and siblings even though the act of remittances disrupts their personal life plans. Remittances can be important to families particularly when it is based on "reciprocal social support" (Faist, 2016, p. 333).

Some participants in this study take pride in the fact that they remit money to assist the education of their younger siblings. This is consistent with the findings of Parreñas (2001) which showed how Fillipina domestic workers in Rome take pride in how they have been able to take the monetary responsibility of educating their nieces, nephews, and other relatives through their remittances. Filipino domestic workers in Rome send monthly remittances to their children, which they claim is an obligation, illustrating how their relationship with their children has a monetary base. Likewise, youth working as domestic workers feel guilty if they don't remit money to their parents, which they claim they have an obligation to do (Parreñas, 2001). This



finding is much like Jerry in this study who claims remittance is a “tradition” for Africans, and that he does not want to be labeled as being “stingy.”

The study on remittances has mostly been on the impact of the cash on the well-being of the household and the economic growth of the receiving country. Though the participants in this study have a material connection to their homeland through remittances, this research seems to find that anxiety always plays a role. Of an interest was Amos, who was anxious about how his family members at home may squander the funds he remits for the use on personal projects. Involving family members to assist in monitoring and implementing immigrants’ pet projects at home could be costly, as they may be untrustworthy and thus hike the price. As Appiah-Yeboah et al. (2013) argue, one of the common projects embarked upon by migrants in their home countries is to finance building projects. The respondents in this study reported visiting their countries, or having their relatives visit, and as such, there is a continuous flow of remittances. It is worth noting that Stella feels she is not obligated to remit money home and does not. This suggests that there could be an emerging change in the remittances pattern of highly skilled Africans migrants, which may lean towards low or no remittance.

**Future ambitions.** The findings of this study indicate that the majority of the participants plan on migrating to Canada, the United States, Singapore, or Australia. They argued that being in Qatar provides them the platform to move to other desired countries. The migration ambition of these participants supports Richards’ (2015) opinion that “the recent increase in youth travel attests to why youth are being described as ‘nomads’ as those who are increasingly on the move” (p.348). The participants gave reasons for future migration plans which are related to career aspirations, a good education for children, better employment conditions, and the possibility of becoming a citizen of one of the above named developed countries. These motivations for

migrating support Bauman's (1998) theoretical point which states that, "wherever we happen to be at the moment, we cannot help knowing that we could be elsewhere, so there is less and less reason to stay anywhere in particular ... we indeed live in a strange circle whose center is everywhere, and circumference nowhere" (p.77).

Most of the participants see Qatar as a stepping stone to the Western countries. Lizzy expressed her migration flexibility and could not really pin down specific countries she would like to go. This confirms Bauman's (1998) statement that the center is everywhere, illustrating that the world is a global place comprising of countries who serve as points of departure to migrants whose mobility or migration ambition have no limit. This illustrates the participant's desire to travel round the world, but with her permanent place of residence being dependent on where her future spouse resides. This evokes Bauman's (1998) idea that the circumference is nowhere. Bauman (1998) uses the terms *tourist* and *vagabond* to explain the lives of migrants. According to Bauman (1998):

The tourists stay or move at their hearts desires. They abandon a site when new untried opportunities beckon elsewhere. The vagabonds know that they won't stay in a place for long, however strongly they wish to, since nowhere they stop are they likely to be welcome. (p. 92)

Bauman (1998) categorizes migrant workers as *global vagabonds*:

Vagabonds move because they find the world within their (local) reach unbearably inhospitable. The tourist travel because they want to; the vagabonds because they have no other bearable choice ... there is no site guaranteeing permanence. (p. 93)

The participants in this study can be linked as global vagabonds; they are ready to move to other dream countries which they think have more opportunities. As Mark rightly said, 95% of his friends will relocate. Their mobility is stimulated by the unbearable and inhospitable migration policies in Qatar and strict naturalization rules do not guarantee their permanence. In addition, Bauman (1998) uses the illustration of a gardener to explain how people who have roots can be

uprooted from a location to another, just like the participants in this study who are ready to uproot themselves from Qatar to be rooted elsewhere.

Jessica expressed her desire to return to her country, get a job with the Ministry of Youth Development, and assist in mentoring the young adults. Her narrative suggests that some South Africans could not be labeled as *global nomads*. A study by Labonté et al. (2015) on skilled health workers from South Africa shows that return migration was a common desire put forward by their participants, which was attributed to “South Africa’s physical environment, family ties, and South African ‘lifestyle,’ ‘culture,’ and ‘social life,’ while cost of living and freezing weather were the big ‘pushes’ out of their destination countries (p. 6). The study by Labonté et al (2015) did not indicate if their findings were based on White South-Africans who may be returning to privilege. Nevertheless, the finding of this study is somewhat similar to that of Labonté et al. (2015) in the sense that there is a desire for return migration by the South African participants in both studies. Overall, this section discussed the migration ambitions of the participants in this study, some of which were inclined towards relocating to specific Western countries, while two of the participants had a different plan.

## CHAPTER 9: RECOMMENDATIONS, STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

I begin this chapter with a discussion on the implications, limitations and strength of the study. I conclude this chapter by highlighting the contributions of this research to the field of migration studies and offers directions for future studies, including recommendations to improve the well-being of migrant workers in Qatar.

### Implications and Recommendations

This study contributes to youth migration studies in the Middle East, particularly relating to African youth. This study shows that potential migrant workers in Qatar, including mid-to-highly skilled migrant workers, are susceptible to exploitation due to the *kafala* sponsorship system, which also makes workers vulnerable. Nonetheless, there are clearly strong push/pull factors that will continue to draw youth to working in Qatar, both to support themselves in the present, to support family back home and to increase skills that could lead to future migration.

A related observation of this study is that migrant workers will continue to experience a delay in salary until the new law on salary payment is reviewed to ensure a country-wide implementation. Future studies should consider why there is a delay in the payment of salaries even when a wage protection system was put in place in 2015. Further research is needed to devise viable solutions to this issue. For example, more substantial changes to the sponsorship system would also be a way to address potential exploitation.

Future studies should also look into how a family visa is obtained. There is a growing number of male African migrant workers in Qatar whose spouses migrated to Qatar under their sponsorship. It would be useful to consider the living and working experiences of the spouses of African migrant workers and the privileges they enjoy and their challenges. One of the privileges the spouses (wives) of African migrant workers enjoy is that they can switch employers at will

without NOC because they are under their husband's sponsorship. The spouses also do not require an exit permit before leaving the country. One potential challenge may be that a spouse risks losing her residence permit anytime her husband's sponsorship or employment contract ends. Future studies could look into other vulnerabilities such as abuse from a spouse. It is common for a male spouse to be the sponsor to the wives, it would be interesting to ascertain if there are female spouses whose husbands have come under their sponsorship.

This study also makes a theoretical contribution to current deliberations on CRT, as it highlights the prevalence of racism in Qatar, a Middle Eastern country. The world community should hold Qatar accountable for the racial hierarchies among the foreign labour force and the ways in which Qatar intends to promote the rights of workers regardless of their nationality. In many ways, this study shows how the disparity experienced by the participants is more based on nationality than race directly, however, the government should consider instituting a minimum wage to guard against such discrepancies in remuneration. It would also be equally important to have active labour unions in Qatar to advocate for the rights of migrant workers.

Future studies should also look specifically into the discrimination in the housing sector because some participants referred to how housing advertisements list the specific nationalities they prefer as tenants thereby excluding other nationalities. Other issues that arose during this study but were not pursued in the analysis include how organization workers living in company-provided accommodations live under restrictions and intense surveillance by their employers. I am also interested in how the majority of migrant workers who obtained loans from Qatari banks have difficulties in paying back the money, so much so that they are constrained to remaining in Qatar. It would be useful if future studies could examine how migrant workers leverage on the zero percent interest loan and why these workers struggle to pay back the money. The

respondents in this study often refer to the exploitation experienced by low and middle-skilled African workers in Qatar, and it would be useful for other studies to look specifically into their problems. Lastly, future research should look specifically into the experiences of African women in Qatar including their experience of sexual harassment. A female participant (nurse) indicated that she was always having sexual stares from men who assumed that she was a sex worker, an experience consistent with my experience in Italy and something that requires greater attention.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The strengths of this study include, the range of workers interviewed mid-to-highly skilled workers worked in a variety of occupations, included both men and women and were from 8 different African countries. Additional strengths of the study include the success of using Skype to access the participants. A few limitations of the study include the lack of balance between male and female participants and the fact that all but one identified as Christians, and Pentecostals more specifically. Other research should look into the experiences of participants with Muslim backgrounds as well as those that are Hindu and Buddhist.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis is based on the interviews conducted with 12 African migrant workers in Qatar, of which 10 are highly skilled and two are mid-skilled. I looked into the motivations of why migrant workers traveled, their patterns of migration, modalities of exploitation, remittance patterns and future ambitions. Participants migrated to Qatar for the following reasons: financial gain, professional growth, unemployment, family ties, intra-company transfer,<sup>9</sup> and bad governance. Participants migrated to Qatar either as organization-sponsored workers or on a so-called free visa. Free visa holders came into Qatar through agents who are involved in visa

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<sup>9</sup> A participant from Ethiopia was transferred to work in Qatar by her employer. In her interview, she stated that there was an opening in Qatar and she was transferred to work in Qatar in 2008. Presently, she is no longer an employee of the company.

racketeering. I used the concept of social capital to shed light into how free visa holders in particular, leveraged their existing networks of relatives and friends to facilitate their migration.

The complex mechanics of labour migration from various African countries to Qatar and the advantages and disadvantages of the “free visa” versus organization-sponsored visa is summarized below. The sites of recruitment for organization-sponsored workers (home country) and who recruits (genuine employers) impacts the working conditions of an organization-sponsored worker. The advantages of having an organizationally sponsored entry status are as follows. The company take up the mobility logistics and newly employed workers are not required to pay exorbitant visa fees to agents. Accommodation and transportation are made available to workers upon their arrival to Qatar. In some cases, highly skilled workers receive high remuneration but middle-skilled workers may not receive high wages.

The relative advantage of being an organization-sponsored worker is tempered by the disadvantage of more difficulty switching employers and being at greater risk of job insecurity. The disadvantages of being organizationally sponsored are felt more by workers who do not hold high employment positions, are not satisfied with their salaries and wish to switch jobs but are unable to do so.

Having a free visa also has advantages and disadvantages. The experiences of free visa holders highlight the significance of the site of recruitment (e.g. various African countries) and who recruits (e.g. agents). The ultimate advantage for migrant workers with free visas is that they ‘buy’ their ‘freedom’ to switch jobs prior to their arrival in Qatar by paying exorbitant fees to agents to process their work visa. The agents, in turn, prepare fake employment contracts to facilitate their clients (potential migrant workers) migration and agents usually do not hesitate to provide a no objection certificate for workers when they arrive in Qatar, enabling these workers

to freely search for genuine jobs and negotiate for higher wages. One of the disadvantages of holding a free visa is that these migrants take responsibility for the cost of migration. Upon their arrival in Qatar, workers have to fend for themselves (by finding accommodation and transportation) and have to search for real jobs. These workers have to pay the agents for every service they need (e.g. I.D. cards, account opening and bed space). Free visa holders may experience challenges integrating into the Qatari labour market when they first migrate; however, in the long run, are at liberty to change employers and negotiate for better terms of employment compared to workers who have organization-sponsored work visas.

Overall, however organization-sponsored workers and free visa holders have some common challenges due to the sponsorship system. I discussed 5 modalities of exploitation, namely salary delay, the inability of migrant workers to switch jobs, discrepancies in remuneration and hierarchization of races, exploitation of low and middle-skilled workers, and lastly, job precarity. Critical race theory was a useful tool to examine some of the experiences of these migrants, but also had some limitations for understanding the dynamics of racism and migrant workers in Qatar. I discussed how the concept nationality is useful to analyze the modalities of exploitations identified in this study than race. I looked into the remittance patterns of African migrants and their future ambitions finding that the majority hope to migrate to Western countries.

There have been many recent reforms in the Qatar labour policy, particularly the cancellation of *kafala* system of sponsorship, the new method of applying for exit permit and the new salary structure. I argued that though the Qatari government initiated these amendments in the labour laws, the new reforms have not eliminated migrant worker vulnerability. Overall, this study suggests that there are connections, between the better documented experiences of low-



skilled South Asian workers and the mid-to-highly African migrant workers examined here. The abolishment of the *kafala* system of sponsorship has not yet led to improve the working and living experiences for these workers.

The use of interviews as the main research method allowed participants to narrate their working and living experiences in Qatar. Interviews create a good platform for storytelling and participants reflected on their personal stories in comparison to the master narratives. The narratives of workers suggest that the few labour rights that exist in Qatar are poorly respected. The recent reforms in the Qatar labour laws were pushed by international organizations such as FIFA administrators, International Labour Organization (ILO), Amnesty International, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and human rights organizations, which pressured the Qatari government into protecting the rights of workers. These international organizations still need to do more to ensure that the national labour standards in Qatar conform to international labour standards in terms of protecting the basic rights of workers, improving the terms of employment and improving job security. Migrant workers should have the right to establish and join organizations freely for collective bargaining, and advocacy without fear of repercussion. In the absence of active labour unions, exploitation of workers is inevitable.

When laws intended to protect migrant workers are not enforced, migrant workers may take proactive steps to resist exploitation; an illustration of this is the example of young “Mandela Kids” South African workers resisting their exploitation in Qatar through either not going to Qatar or staying for shorter periods. Such actions are laudable as it suggests that potential migrant workers are cautious of their rights. Nonetheless, the option of refusing to work in Qatar or staying for a shorter period may not be an option for potential migrants who live in abject poverty around the world and would like to migrate to Qatar. Migrant workers with poor

socio-economic status will be more willing to migrate to Qatar and probably stay for a longer period. This shows the importance of labour rights and unions in Qatar to advocate for the rights of workers, particularly rights pertaining to freedom to switch jobs without the requirement of a no objection certificate from an employer. Other areas of advocacy for unions are related to the discrepancies in remuneration based on nationality, delay in salaries, exploitation of workers (particularly low and middle-skilled workers who are more vulnerable) and job insecurity.

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## APPENDIX A

### Letter of Invitation

19th December 2016

**The Title of Study:** Transnational Labour Migration: Experiences of Mid-to-Highly Skilled African Migrant Workers in Doha, Qatar

**Student Principal Investigator:** Eneze Imerion, M.A candidate, Department of Child and Youth Studies.

**Supervising Investigator:** Tom O'Neill, Professor, Department of Child and Youth Studies.

We would like to invite you to participate in a research project entitled “Transnational Labour Migration: Experiences of Mid-to-Highly Skilled African Migrant Workers in Doha, Qatar”. The purpose of this project is to document the working and living experiences of mid-to-highly skilled African migrant youth workers in Doha, Qatar.

African migrant workers such as yourself are invited to participate in this study which will involve a one-hour Skype video call aimed at documenting your living and working conditions, your concerns, challenges and the opportunities available to you in Doha, Qatar.

The direct benefits of this study to participants are as follows. First, this research is the first of its kind that seeks to document the experiences of African migrant workers in Doha. Second, participants will have the opportunity to share their working and living experiences, their concerns, challenges and other positive opportunities in Qatar. Lastly, through this research, the experiences of participants will help policy makers to formulate policies that protect the rights of migrant workers. All information you provide is considered confidential; your name will not be included or in any other way associated with the information collected in the study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca). If you wish to obtain a summary of the research findings after the study has been completed, please email [eb15pw@brocku.ca](mailto:eb15pw@brocku.ca).

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact us at the information below.

Thank you,  
Eneze Imerion  
Graduate Student  
[eb15pw@brocku.ca](mailto:eb15pw@brocku.ca)

Dr. Tom O'Neill  
Professor & Faculty Supervisor  
[toneill@brocku.ca](mailto:toneill@brocku.ca)

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board [16-130].

## APPENDIX B

### Verbal Script

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> December 2016

**Project Title:** Transnational Labour Migration: Experiences of Mid-to-Highly Skilled African Migrant Workers in Doha, Qatar

Eneze Imerion

Dr. Tom O'Neill

Student Principal Investigator (SPI): Supersizing Investigator (SI):

eb15pw@brocku

[toneill@brocku.ca](mailto:toneill@brocku.ca), 905-688-5550, ext. 3110,

Department of Child and Youth Studies Department of Child and Youth Studies Brock University

### INTRODUCTION

Hello. I'm Eneze Imerion. I am conducting interviews about the experiences of mid-to-highly skilled African migrant workers in Doha, Qatar. I'm conducting this as part of a master's program in Child and Youth Studies at Brock University in St. Catharine's, Ontario, Canada. I'm working under the direction of Dr. O'Neill of Brock University department of Child and Youth Studies.

### INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves narrating your experiences as an African migrant youth working and living in Doha. The general purpose of this research is to document the working conditions, living experiences, the challenges, and concerns of African youths in Doha and the opportunities available to you. Your participation in this study will go a long way to gain a better understanding of the working conditions of African youth and explore ways towards ensuring that your rights are protected.

### WHAT'S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be involved in a Skype video call for one hour. Questions that will be asked during the interview will be related to, why you migrated to Qatar, your experiences while migrating, the networks that facilitated your migration, type of visas, how you obtained your visas, educational qualifications, your profession, and how happy are you with your job. Other questions will look into, how you relate with your colleagues from other nationalities, are you aware of your rights in Qatar as a migrant worker and if your rights are protected. Additional questions would focus on your relationship with your employer, would employers be willing to allow employees switch jobs, are salaries paid regularly, and are you comfortable with the welfare package (accommodation, feeding, transport) provided by employers. Other questions will focus on the sponsorship and exit permit system, social life, physical health, relationship with family in your home country and are you planning to migrate to other countries at the end of your contract.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS**

Your responses will highlight specific areas where the rights of workers are violated which would be useful for policy makers in improving the welfare package for migrant workers and ensure that worker's rights are protected. In addition, your contribution will be valuable in furthering our understanding of the working and living conditions of the African community in Doha, more specifically, the findings will help us to develop better recommendations to improve the well-being of migrant workers. Given the nature of the topic, the risk associated with your participation is minimal, and not greater than your living and working conditions in Qatar.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

All the information you provide will be confidential. I will report the findings of this research using some participants' quotes. These quotes will be treated with confidentiality – including removing any identifying features (personal names, dates, places, names of the organization you work for,) that might inadvertently identify the speaker.

The Skype interviews will be audio taped and I will transcribe the information immediately. Afterwards, the recorded interview will be securely disposed. The transcribed data will be assigned a code and the transcripts will be stored in a closet with locks. Data will be kept for two years following publication of the findings, after which the transcripts will be shredded and securely disposed. Access to this data will be restricted to Ms. Imerion.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. In addition, if you wish, you may decline to answer any specific questions. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

It is worth emphasizing that participating (or not participating) in this study will not influence your right to live and work in Qatar. All the information is confidential and at no point will this research jeopardize your migration status.

**PUBLICATION OF RESULTS**

Participants can obtain a one-page summary feedback of the group findings by emailing Ms. Imerion. Beyond this study, it is quite likely that attempts will be made to present and publish the results. It is worth emphasizing again that the findings in this study will be confidential and anonymized.

**CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE**

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Eneze Imerion or Tom O'Neill using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [file 16-130]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project.

**CONSENT AGREEMENT**

- ☐ Do you have any questions or would like any additional details?
- ☐ Do you agree to participate in this study knowing that you can withdraw at any point with no consequences to you.

**APPENDIX C**

## Interview Protocol

1. How long have you lived in Qatar?
2. Why did you migrate to Qatar?
3. How did you obtain a work and residence permit?
4. What kind of job(s) do you work in? What do you like about your job? What do you not like about your job?
5. What kind of education or training was required for the job?
6. To what extent does your identity as a man or a woman influence the kind of employment opportunities available to you?
7. Does your nationality and religion shape the kind of opportunities available to you?
8. Is there a welfare package or incentives attached to your job and how has it impacted your living and working experiences?
9. As a migrant worker in Qatar, do you feel exploited in any way?
10. How is your relationship with other migrant workers from Africa and other migrant workers from across the world?
11. How is your relationship with family members in your home country? Do you send money home? Who is managing your resources and have they been helpful?
12. Where do you see yourself in five (5) or ten (10) years?

**APPENDIX D**

## Participant Characteristics

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Year of arrival in Qatar</b>	<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>Profession</b>
Amos, Male	Zimbabwe	2011	BSc Honors Human Resource Management	Talent Acquisition Specialist
John, Male	Nigeria	2013	BSc Business Administration U.K Safety Certifications	Health Safety and Environment Officer
Lizzy, Female	Ghana	2013	High School Certificate Diploma in Leadership	House Keeping Coordinator
Hassan, Male	Egypt	2016	BSC Civil Engineering	Site Engineer
Jessica, Female	South Africa	2010	High School Certificate Diploma in Theology (in progress)	Shift Supervisor
Stella, Female	Ethiopia	2008	Project Management	Technical Manager
Peace, Female	Kenya	2008	Child Psychology & Computer Science	Teacher
Jerry, Male	Cameroon	2013	Nursing	Company Nurse
Mark, Male	Nigeria	2013	B.A. International Relations	Health Safety and Environment Officer
Linda, Female	Nigeria	2016	Nursing	Company Nurse
Dave, Male	Nigeria	2013	BSC Civil Engineering Diploma: Quality Management System (U.K Certifications) Safety certifications (American society of Quality)	Project Engineer
Evans, Male	Nigeria	2013	BSc Environmental Engineering	Health Safety and Environment Officer